the PARIS REVIEW

14

ISAK DINESEN

and

FRANÇOISE SAGAN

two interviews

drawings by

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Stories

Poetry

AUTUMN 1956

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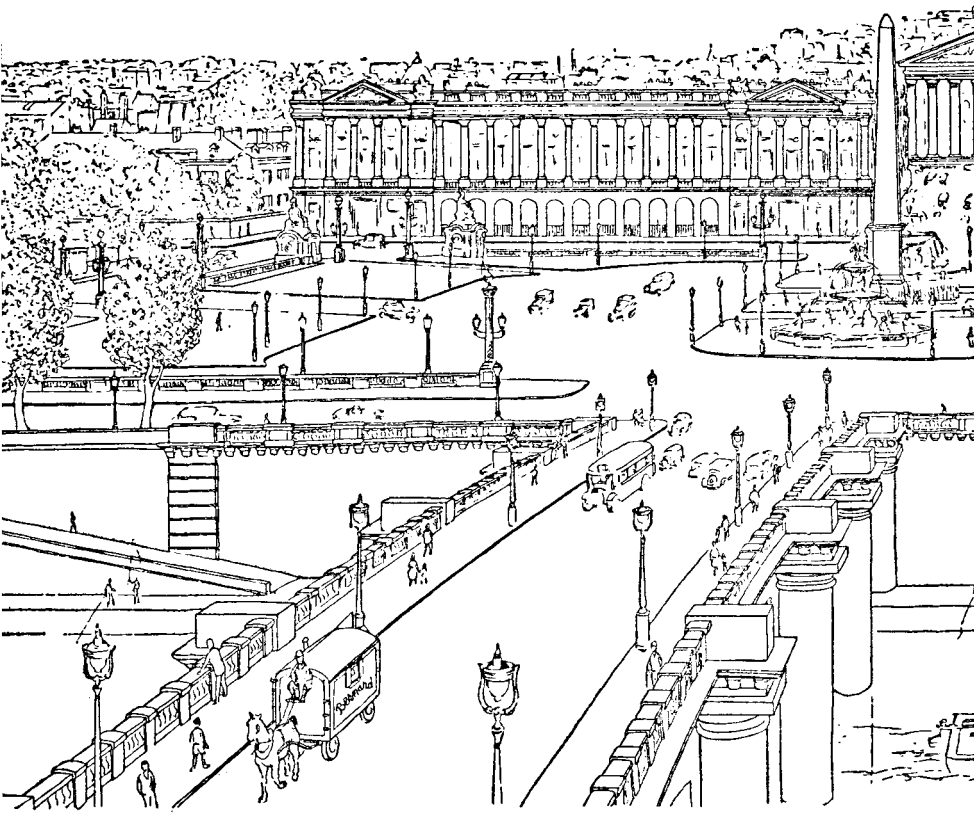

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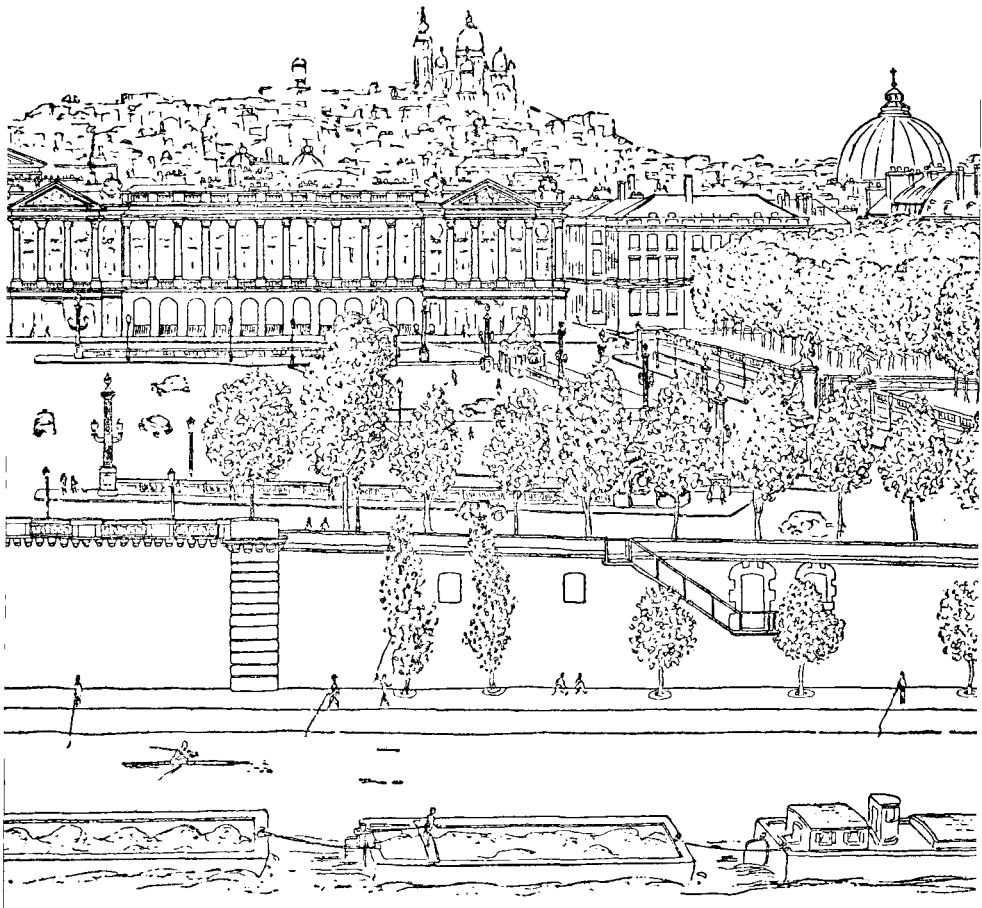

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WILLIAM FAIN

AT THE POOL

THE summer that Henry Wilder was in love with Jane Pratt—he was fifteen then—he was also much under the influence of Otis Purney. This was a summer which, when he looked back on it, seemed to have been spent on the brown sands of the Poquinuck Island Club, or around the pool of the club, or in the men's bathhouse, or racing breakneck to Poquinuck in Purney's convertible. Salt water drying to make his combed hair stiff; the hot gray-painted boards of the bathhouse under his bare feet and the feel of the wide cracks between these boards; the sun-hotted leather of the seat of Purney's car—these were the flavors of the summer.

The influences of Jane and Purney on Henry seemed to him precisely opposite in quality: Jane's wholesome, to put it all in a word into which it would not fit; Purney's not. The thing was, Henry's parents considered Otis an unwholesome boy. He had heard them say it, and while denying it and spending all his time with Purney in defiance of them, he believed it somewhat. Purney wasn't much liked by any parents, or by people his own age, either. He was a thin, pimply boy, no good at sports, who knew all about sex before anybody else and who knew plenty of dirty jokes. His mother, who was divorced, had lied so that Otis could get a driver's license when he was fourteen; Otis had had a dinner jacket at twelve and tails at fourteen. He was a year older than Henry and had already owned two cars of his own, both Ford convertibles. Boys

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who were good at sports held Purney in contempt but borrowed his car; he was generous. Henry really liked him; partly because Henry himself was no good at sports either and partly (this was the reason he gave publicly) because Purney had a wonderful sense of humor. Besides, he felt a little pleasant guilt in associating with Purney; he was so unwholesome.

To speak of Jane's "influence" on Henry may be to use the word oddly. If someone had told her, "You have a great influence on Henry Wilder," Jane Pratt would have laughed, in the clear, easy, unthinking way that healthy girls of seventeen have—girls whose happy, straightforward lives never were and never will be influenced by anyone or anything out of sight of the smooth and sensible path on which they move, like a comfortable, rapid train of Pullmans on its New York, New Haven & Hartford tracks, from birth to death. Just as nothing much—certainly nothing new—could influence Jane, so Jane's own influence on Henry was no more voluntarily exerted by her than a stone intentionally exerts ripples when it hits the water. Still, she had an overpowering effect on him that summer, though they were almost strangers; it had been a year or two since he had even spoken a word to her. He watched her, thought about her, and considered every action he took in the light of how it would seem to her, meritorious or not. This was mainly guesswork. Since they no longer knew each other well enough to talk, it was hard to know what would please her. As far as he could tell, she never looked at him, approvingly or disapprovingly. His main effort during the summer had been to reach two states which, surely, would be to her liking: a mature bearing, and physical fitness. For a good part of the summer he kept his feelings about her secret from everyone; when he did talk, it was of course to Otis Purney.

The first time Henry spoke to Purney about her was at the Poquinuck Island Club pool. That afternoon they had driven over from Granchester at a maniacal speed, as usual. The last half-mile, along the causeway between the flat fields of gray-green, salt smelling marsh (Poquinuck was not a real island) and over the little humped bridge that gave you such a roller-

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coaster bounce if you took it fast, Purney, "hunched over the controls," as he put it, had roared along in second gear at fifty miles an hour. "I'm going to drive the rest of the way in second," he had said, "to prove that I want a woman." Purney was always talking about sex. He and Henry were both obsessed with sex that summer, but Purney talked about it more easily.

Henry and Purney were sitting by the edge of the pool watching Jane dive when Henry spoke. Though the club had a beach, nearly everyone now swam in the pool, which had been built eight years before. The only people who still swam in the Sound—it was often pretty fruity—were a few members who had belonged to the club before the pool was built and who liked to make it clear that their Poquinuck habits had been formed long ago—that is, at least eight years ago. So quickly are things and people changed and customs grown old on the Connecticut shore of Long Island Sound. The sand, along that part of the shore, was a dirty brown, not dazzling. So the pool was where most people swam. When Henry and Purney used the beach at all, they just sat on it.

Jane was a yellow-haired, blue-eyed girl with long brown legs. She was a wonderful athlete, and she must have been muscular, but she wasn't bulgily or angularly athletic; just a pretty, tremendously healthy girl. She was wearing a red bathing suit that fitted her tightly and that just about filled the requirements of decency; still, there was nothing indecent about it, either, because of the nature of the girl. She clearly wore it not to attract attention but the better to swim and dive.

She had been diving for some time. Now she climbed again up the ladder to the high board, off which Henry, to his shame, had barely the nerve to take an awkward header (only two years ago he had been *jumping* off it feet first), and, standing there for a moment in the sun, trim, erect, wet, and wonderfully tanned, turned her head sideways and back and with the left hand smoothed the wet blond hair back from her face. A casual, alert, beautiful gesture, like something a hunting dog might make.

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Henry and Purney sat on the edge of the pool, their feet dangling in the water.

"I think I'm in love with her," Henry said. It had been a long time coming out. He had yearned to say it, but he was afraid Otis Purney would laugh. And why not? It was ridiculous enough. Even two moments before, Henry had thought he might not, after all, say it. Now he had. He felt better, the words had been in him for a couple of months; it was best to get rid of them, wasn't it? But still he was uneasy at the thought that his love, being spoken, had become so much more a fact. In so becoming, it had lost a little something.

"Who? Pratt?" Purney said.

"Yes."

"You're kidding. You don't even know her."

"Of course I know her. I knew her six years ago, and I was in love with her then, and I still am."

"My God," Purney said. "What are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing," Henry said. "There's nothing I *can* do. I'm too young for her. She's seventeen."

"That doesn't mean anything," Purney said. "When I was in Atlanta last year there was a girl who was crazy about me and she was nineteen."

Otis Purney and his mother went at Christmas every year to Atlanta, where they had obscure, reportedly terrible relatives who were never seen in Granchester. Otis always came back with a lot of talk about the nymphomaniacs in Atlanta. At home he had no success with girls; he did not even try much.

"What do you think of her?" Henry asked. "Don't you think she's wonderful?"

"Not bad," Purney said, looking her over, up there on the diving board. "Not bad, but not my type. I like them low-slung and squalid." That was an expression of his.

"Oh, for God's sake, Purney," Henry said. "I'm serious. Don't you think she's wonderful?"

"Too much tan," Purney said. "I like the pale, tired, indoor type. Pratt's too healthy for me."

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"I think her tan's wonderful."

"Women're sexier without a tan," Purney said. "A tan sort of takes the edge off things."

"I don't *want* her to be sexy," Henry said.

"This is bad," Purney said. "My God, Wilder, what are you going to do?"

"I've told you," Henry said. "There's nothing I *can* do."

"Listen, Hank. This is awful. You can't just take it this way and not do *anything*," Purney said. He spoke earnestly. He and Henry never called each other by their first names except when they were being very serious. "There's no woman in the world that can't be had some way."

"How do you know?" Henry asked.

"I know," Purney said.

"Not her."

"*Any* woman, including Pratt."

"Even if that was true, which it isn't," Henry said, "she wouldn't be interested in somebody two years younger than she is."

"There's always a way," Purney said. "She'll be here Saturday night for the dance. Maybe you can get somewhere then. You can try it."

"No, I'd better not."

"God damn it, Henry, you've got to at least *try*."

Jane took three long, elegant steps out on the high board, bounced high on the balls of her feet, rose, bent double in a neat jackknife, snapped straight again, and sank like an arrow into the green water of the pool. When she came up with the hair streaming yellow over her eyes, Bob Hake, a huge, broad-shouldered, deeply-tanned man of eighteen, an athlete who combined winning swimming races with being a hell-raiser who was drunk at all the dances, thrashed over to Jane with his powerful crawl—he had been half the length of the pool away—put his hand on top of her yellow head, and pushed it under. She bobbed up laughing and he shoved her head down again, raising his elbow high like a man squeezing a grapefruit. The bastard! Henry thought. How could Jane —the spirit of health, fitness, and purity—be on friendly terms

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with this gross and dissolute man, whose physique must (inside) be rotted with alcohol, ready to break up at any moment? Besides, it was amazing and dispiriting that a man he had seen obviously drunk less than a week ago could swim at all, let alone so superbly as Hake did. Henry himself could get around a pool well enough—he was to Hake as a farmer on horseback, long used to riding but with no style, is to a polished horse-show performer. Henry thought that condition had a good deal to do with whatever small competence in the water he had.

"Come on, let's get out of here," he said to Purney. He couldn't stand continuing to look at Jane and Bob Hake, who were now splashing each other merrily.

They walked into the men's bathhouse; Henry felt like a man eighty years old. As they entered this sunny, gray-painted little city of wooden streets lined with dressing cabins, Purney, a heavy smoker, took a cigarette from the package he was carrying. "Give me a butt, Purney," Henry said.

"You?" Purney said.

"Yeah."

"O.K.," Purney said, shaking his head. "I thought you wanted to keep in shape."

"The hell with that," Henry said, and they both lit up.

When they were dressed Purney said: "I'm going to work on the hole for a little while. Do you want to get the car?"

"O.K.," Henry said. "Thanks." Purney gave him the keys. He was always decent about letting Henry drive the car; and even from the parking lot to the porch of the club was good practice.

The hole Purney had spoken of was this: a tiny irregularity between two dovetailing boards in the wall of one of the dressing compartments. This flimsy parietal wall happened to be also the dividing wall between the men's and the women's bathhouses. Beyond it, Purney believed, was one of the little compartments for women. Working slowly and meticulously with his penknife on the little irregularity, Purney was gradually enlarging it with the hope of being able to peep through it. The project was delicate; there were many

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dangers. Purney must not be found at work by Gus, the old man in white ducks and an undershirt who was custodian of the men's bathhouse, or by any member; the hole, during and after construction, must be unnoticeable from both the men's and the women's sides. Henry had been uneasy ever since Purney had discovered the possibility and gone to work on it, four or five days ago. He was afraid Purney would be caught and that he would be involved; he was also afraid, inexplicably, of looking through it (of course he would) when it was finished.

Henry walked across the hot sandy parking lot and got in Purney's car and started it, sitting there roaring the motor for a moment—"warming up the mighty engines," Purney would have said. Then he spun the car slowly round the big circular drive in front of the club. On each round, as he came by Pat, the guard who stood in the little sentry box at the entrance to the club grounds, he felt a twinge of fear. Pat, because he wore a sort of uniform of visored cap and faded blue denim shirt and trousers, was a sort of official. Could he arrest someone for driving without a license? Purney would not have been afraid under the circumstances, Henry thought; you had to hand him that. He had nerve. But then, Purney was on cordial terms with Pat and all people like Pat. Though boys and girls and their mothers and fathers might detest him, Purney was certainly the friend of Pat; of Gus, the bathhouse custodian; of Chick Alexander, the leader of the orchestra that played at the Poquinuck dances and at a hundred other dances all summer long at country clubs and beach clubs from Rye to Fairfield; of Granchester policemen, merchants, and barbers; that is, of the inhabitants of the world, who were frightening strangers (almost any of whom might at any moment ask him if he had a driver's license) to Henry.

Purney came out, took his place behind the wheel while Henry slid over, and said out of the corner of his mouth, almost without moving his lips, like a jailbird: "Got it."

"Can you see?" Henry asked. He was interested, all right, though frightened.

"I can see plenty," Purned muttered, waving at Pat as he swung the car past him and out toward the causeway.

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"Did anyone come in?"

"No," Purney said. "I didn't want to stay there too long and take a chance of Gus noticing something. Not that I can't handle Gus."

"What would you do if he caught you?"

"Slip him a five-dollar note," Purney said. Of course there was that about many of Purney's friends—they were bought with a five-dollar bill or the prospect of one. Purney always called it a five-dollar note.

That night when Henry was in bed he lay wondering how he had lost contact with Jane Pratt. As he had told Otis Purney, he had known her six years ago. It was not true, however, that he had been in love with her then. But when he was nine and she was eleven, they had been the most intimate friends. The Wilders lived closer to the center of Granchester then, on Holly Ridge Road, and their house backed up to that of Dr. Pratt. In the loft above the Wilder garage Henry and Jane had learned to smoke together—cigarettes, cigars, an occasional pipe. (Henry gave up tobacco after a couple of years, when he began worrying about ruining his wind; he had noticed that Jane now smoked openly and officially, although not much. The fact that she was *allowed* to smoke irritated him; it increased the distance between them.) In those days over the garage, for nearly two years, Henry and Jane Pratt had been as close friends as, for example, he and Purney were now. And then—what? She had gone away to school, in time he had gone away too, and she had returned, in the summers and vacations, a different person, who knew different people, people he didn't know at all. It had not mattered until this summer; he had not thought of her. Now, when he loved her, all that intimacy, which he had not valued highly when he had it, was gone for nothing, as if it had never been. At moments like the one when Bob Hake had ducked her, he could not yell, as he longed to: "But you can't do that! I used to smoke cigars with her over my father's garage!" Henry remembered that he had endured the first cigars better than she—he had not got sick and she had. But the prestige of that superiority, powerful then, was gone now.

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Now people like Bob Hake with the immense shoulders, who had not even *lived* in Granchester when Henry and Jane smoked together, shoved her head under water and she came up laughing; and Henry could not even speak to her.

In the bottom of Henry's heart, as he lay thinking, was a little regret that he had told Purney he was in love with Jane. Telling had taken some of the gloss off his love. Before, in its limited way, it had had its own kind of perfection. Now Purney, suggesting possible action, possible satisfaction, possible attainment of goals that had never, up to now, been part of Henry's image of his love at *all*, made it *all* real. Henry and Jane had to be, from now on in Henry's thoughts, real people. Whatever there was, or was to be, between them (probably nothing, of course, he reminded himself) became real. With love's limitations gone, its perfection vanished too.

And then Purney had been allowed to look at something which, unwholesome boy, he had no right to see.

The next afternoon Henry went to Poquinuck with Purney. Every fifteen or twenty minutes they would saunter back to the bathhouse from the pool and have a look at the hole. These trips were disappointing. In the first place, Purney, who always exaggerated everything, had said you could see plenty; and in fact only about a square foot of space was visible in the women's cabin that was on the other side of the wall. To make it worse, Henry and Purney had the bad luck to run across a succession of nurses, who didn't swim themselves, changing little boys and girls of three or four in and out of bathing suits. It was infuriating to get no reward for running such a risk. They began to wonder if that particular cabin was reserved for nurses and babies. They didn't get a look at a single undressed woman.

Henry and Purney sat at the edge of the pool, dangling their legs in the warm green water. Jane was practicing swan dives; she had been at it for nearly an hour. The shadow of the thought that only a dull girl could endure the monotony of such diligent practice—climb the ladder up to the high

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board; immerse; emerge; pull herself up the ladder out of the water, and then the same thing all over again—crept into the corner of Henry's mind and was indignantly expelled.

"You have to try," Purney said. "You just never can tell how a woman'll be about a thing like that. Ten, twenty years from now, you might find out that she'd really been crazy about you. Then how would you feel?"

"There's nothing I can do," Henry said.

"Yes, there is," Purney insisted. "She always goes to these lousy dances here. She'll be here Saturday night. I tell you what. We'll come too. You can take her out to the car. Dance with her, and then ask her to go out to the car with you. Then go to work on her."

"She won't go."

"All right. If she doesn't, you haven't lost anything."

"Even if she did"—a dizzying, alarming hope began to rise in Henry—"she wouldn't let me get anywhere."

"How do you know?" Purney said. "She might not, and then again she might. If she did, and you did get to first base, you'd be the happiest guy in the world."

"That's true," Henry said.

"You can take her for a drive if you want to," Purney said.

"Take the car for an hour, if it looks like it'll help."

"That's swell of you, Otie."

"That's O.K."

"But you know—gee, Otie, I don't know if I can handle it."

"Sure you can," Purney said. "You'll be all right. You'll find that she'll let you know what she wants and what she doesn't want. And when it's all over, you may have quite a story to tell me."

Purney had to go home early for a saxophone lesson. Henry stayed on, arranging for a ride home with someone else. After a time he went into the bathhouse, got a towel from Gus, and went to the cabin where the hole was. He had not liked looking through it with Purney hanging on his shoulder. Now, with a fearful glee, he put his eye to the orifice. It was the time when people were leaving the pool and the beach. Later on,

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Henry was convinced that, before peering through the hole, he had known by some means what he was going to see. What he saw—what stared back at him when he put his eye to the hole—was a pair of white buttocks above two tanned upper thighs. Despite the foreknowledge of which he was later so certain, he did not at once recognize the buttocks. They were plentifully sprinkled with bright red pimples. After about thirty seconds, the owner of the buttocks moved away from the wall a little, and he realized the buttocks were Jane's, and horror filled him—not only because they were pimpled, but also just because he had seen them.

The next day Henry and Purney found the hole puttied over. Gus was more alert about that sort of thing than they had imagined; other, and older, members had tried it before. Henry was relieved to see the hole blocked, and he told Purney nothing of what he had seen. He tried not to think about it himself; but now and again against his will the vision popped into his mind—deep tan interrupted sharply by strong, white roundnesses, sprayed with blazing red.

The Saturday night dances at the Poquinuck Island Club were tame, wholesome affairs, in the opinion of Purney and therefore in Henry's; and they rarely went; there were plenty of other dances around the countryside on Saturday nights. Chick Alexander brought one of his small units—his orchestra was flexible, ranging from four pieces, with himself not present, for the dismal dances at lesser beach clubs, to thirty for an elaborate deb party. For Poquinuck, Chick came himself, with his guitar and only five other pieces—two saxophones, trumpet, piano, and drums. These Poquinuck dances, for boys sixteen to twenty and girls fourteen to eighteen (Henry really had no right to be there), drew much the same people who could be seen at the pool any afternoon. There was no liquor served, and although Purney and Henry did not drink yet, they liked the idea of parties where there was drinking; they seemed wilder. At the Poquinuck dances, there were never any of the strange, wild girls from faraway cities whose names

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would fly along the stag line at more exciting dances—girls who were drunk, who wore no bras, who disappeared five times to parked cars with different guys; who, after the dance, fled back to Charleston, Dallas, or Cleveland, never to be seen again but to be talked of for years after. No, at Poquinuck, the girls were wholesome, the daughters of your parents' friends. The boys were wholesome too. A few wastrels like Bob Hake might drop in, not drunk yet, just flushed, usually on their way to another, wilder dance, with bottles in their cars. At Poquinuck you could always smell the Sound, a healthy smell, and on the dance floor you could nearly feel, it seemed, the sand between your toes. These dances ended early—at twelve.

Henry and Purney drove over and went to the men's room to comb their hair. Henry had learned only a couple of years before, from Purney, how to do this correctly. You already wore Vitalis. But that was not enough. In the men's room you filled a basin with cold water, draped a bath towel around your neck and shoulders, and dipped your head right into the water. Then, using the coarse part of the comb, you combed your dripping hair straight forward over the eyes. Then, switching to the fine part of the comb, you made one of those divisions created by the coarse teeth the basis for your part, and flattened the hair down firmly with the comb as you divided it, left and right. This, on top of Vitalis, would hold Henry's hair for half an hour. Then bumpy curls would start to appear, and he'd have to go back to the men's room. He envied Purney his straight hair.

He and Purney came out together, both wearing white dinner jackets. Such humdrum gatherings were these little Poquinuck dances that a number of guys were not wearing any kind of evening dress. There were even some girls of fourteen who were still *little girls,* wearing little-girl dresses and flat shoes and no make-up.

"This is worse than I remembered," Purney said. Henry knew that they would not have stayed here long if it had not been for Jane. He valued Purney's sacrifice.

Henry and Otis Purney were veteran stag-liners; they were

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not much for dancing. Henry took a place in the line. Before joining him there Purney had to walk, snapping his fingers and moving in time to the music, to the bandstand to say Hallo to Chick Alexander, who grinned down at him over his guitar without missing a thrum, tanned, white-toothed, forever young; Chick had been playing the same way and looking the same way for twenty years. He looked like a lifeguard except that he had clothes on.

Standing in the line Henry looked for Jane and saw her at once. She was wearing a red dress about the same color as her bathing suit. He wanted to be careful about whom she was dancing with when he cut in. He didn't feel he could cut in if she were with, say, Bob Hake, and then ask her to go to the car with him. The contrast between Hake and himself would be too great. Well, there could be no better time than now; she was dancing with Colby Walling, a soft, pale boy, barely sixteen, who had to have a tutor because he was always sick and couldn't go away to school. Nothing to be afraid of there. But he let them pass by once before setting himself to cut in. As Jane and Colby Walling came by the second time he started forward and then stepped back again. He remembered that Purney still had the keys to the car, so it was no use. She went by with Colby Walling again, and he loved her.

Purney came up and said immediately: "Have you danced with her?"

"No."

"What are you waiting for?"

"Give me the keys."

Otis Purney put the keys in Henry's hand. Jane came by again, this time dancing with someone Henry did not know. Henry wished it were still Colby Walling; it was Walling, he had decided, that he wanted to cut in on. He let her go by again and Purney said: "What's the matter with you?"

"I'm waiting till she's dancing with Walling again. I don't want to cut in when she's dancing with somebody I don't know."

"Don't be a dope. Go ahead."

But Henry let her go by again, this time with another boy

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he didn't know. A fair number of people were dancing with Jane; she was reasonably, but not spectacularly, popular. Boys liked her but didn't often go crazy over her. Henry was glad they didn't. He would have been glad if everyone but him had loathed her. Well, the next time—it was *this* time, by the time he was thinking it—he must dance with her. And it was Bob Hake, gigantic in tails, that she came by with.

"Go ahead!" Otis Purney said.

"I can't cut in on Hake."

"Listen, Hake's a dope. I happen to know he was kicked out of the Gunnery *and* Johnny Hun. He's just a big dumb oaf. Go ahead."

Henry sucked in his cheeks to make himself look older and stepped out onto the floor. Hake and Jane were whirling along at a tremendous clip. Henry touched Hake on his hard upper arm, tight in the sleeve of his tail coat. Hake was undoubtedly going somewhere afterward. The two of them were chattering as they danced, and Hake ignored Henry's tap. No backing out now; Henry touched Hake's arm again. They stopped dancing and stood there laughing, about something asinine Henry supposed, while he waited. "Is that a promise?" Hake said. "It certainly is," Jane said. "No kidding, now?" Hake said. "No kidding," Jane said. They both laughed continuously as they said these things. Finally Hake consented to remove himself and Henry and Jane started off. Henry's dancing was somewhat sedate. Jane, an athlete, danced athletically, and she took charge of their dancing, whisking Henry along energetically. She appeared to do so unconsciously; indeed, she seemed to be nearly unconscious of dancing with Henry, as a person, at all. He assumed miserably that she was intoxicated from her dance with Hake; actually she was only intoxicated, as girls are, by the facts of dancing and being at a dance. Perspiring a good deal, Jane hustled Henry round the floor. After a little time she stood back from him and said: "Why, Henry Wilder!" and let out a peal of laughter. *Laughing* at him! Henry could not know that she was laughing in the same way she had with Hake and for the same reasons: delight that she was at a dance, that she was dancing, and that she was herself.

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"Jane, do you remember, when we used to live on Holly Ridge Road?"

"Oh, yes. I think so. Right near us. We still live in the same house."

"And you and I used to go up to the garage, my father's garage and smoke?"

"We did? When was that?"

"Six years ago. Don't you remember?"

"I don't think so. I certainly didn't smoke six years ago, and I should hope *you* didn't."

All right. Perfectly hopeless. She didn't remember, or pretended not to remember. The fact was, she really did not remember; she had, on entering young womanhood, almost totally forgotten childhood, and would not remember it again for several years. But to Henry it seemed likeliest she was pretending to have forgotten.

Still, he was committed to try; he must persevere. They were dancing past the bandstand now. Henry smiled at Chick Alexander and said: "Hi, Chick." Chick smiled and nodded back over his guitar, in the way (Henry knew) that he smiled and nodded at people he did not know. But perhaps Jane had been fooled. Perhaps she thought he knew Chick as well as Otis Purney did.

"Chick's a swell guy," Henry said.

"He is?"

Henry pressed her right hand with his left—not a satisfactory squeeze, for they danced together rather jerkily; Jane, though she moved vigorously and gracefully, had a faulty sense of rhythm. To his astonishment she pressed his hand back.

He took a little courage. "Jane, I want to ask you something."

Colby Walling cut in. Henry watched her and loved her as she danced off—buoyant, full of good spirits and health and loveliness, graceful, slightly out of rhythm.

"Well?" Purney asked him.

"I didn't have time."

"Dance with her again."

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"I can't cut back."

"It's a good thing to show her you're rushing her. She's not getting a rush here tonight. I tell you what. I'll cut in on Walling and dance with her and then you cut in right away."

Purney moved out across the floor and danced with Jane. He was a good dancer; Henry wondered if the change from Purney's complex gyrations to his own conservative steps might make a bad impression on her. No, that was going too far; Purney wasn't to be worried about. Henry sucked in his cheeks and touched Purney's elbow as they came by the stag line.

"Why, Henry Wilder!" And another peal of laughter.

"Jane, I want to tell you something."

"Henry, are you making faces at me? Why are you making that face?"

"What do you mean?"

"Sucking in your cheeks that way."

"I can't help it," Henry lied wildly. "I've been sick."

"Oh, I'm sorry," Jane said politely. "You look very nice, all slicked up."

"Jane, what was it that Hake made you promise?" Henry asked.

"What?"

"He said: 'Is that a promise?' and you said it was."

"Gosh, I forget," Jane said. She had forgotten. That was three partners ago, a lifetime ago. "Don't you think Bob Hake's a scream?"

Well, he must get it over with.

"Jane," he blurted, "let's go out to the car for a while."

"What car?"

"Purney's."

"Gosh, has Otis Purney got a car?"

"He's on his second car," Henry said impatiently. "He's had his license for two years. Let's go out there."

"What for?" Jane asked perfectly innocently.

"Smoke a cigarette."

"Henry Wilder, have you taken up smoking? What would your mother say if I told her? I've got half a mind to tell her."

"Jane!"

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"Well, *I'm* not giving you any cigarettes to smoke, anyway. I wouldn't want to have *that* on my conscience."

Blinding misery. Some person, never to be identified, cut in, and Henry went to the men's room and started combing his hair. He had been doing this dully for fifteen minutes when Otis Purney came in.

"What happened, Hank?"

"She's in love with Bob Hake," Henry answered cataleptically.

"I'll be God damned," Purney said. "Did she tell you so?"

"She as good as told me so," Henry lied.

"That isn't so bad," Purney said. "I'm pretty sure he doesn't give a damn about her."

"It doesn't make any difference. She doesn't like me. Maybe she hates me for all I know."

"Gee, that's awful," Purney said. "Did you ask her to go out to the car?"

"Oh, yes. She laughed at me."

"Jesus, Hank, I swear to God I'm sorry."

"Why did you have to make me do it? I was all right."

"I didn't know it would turn out this way," Purney said. "I thought, Pratt isn't very popular, and you might have a good chance."

"Why couldn't you mind your own business and leave me alone?" Henry asked. "I was doing O.K."

"Christ, I'm sorry," Purney said. "If I'd had any idea it'd be this way I'd've kept my mouth shut."

"Why couldn't you keep it shut anyway?"

"I don't know," Purney said unhappily. "I thought it had a good chance of working out."

"What business of yours was it if it worked out or not? Why did you have to keep pushing me and pushing me?"

"Now look, Hank," Purney said. "Just look at it this way for a minute. Suppose you'd done all right. Suppose I'd been right and you'd got somewhere. Right now, or maybe an hour from now, you'd be in here telling me all about it. Think how that would've been, and remember I had no way of knowing that wasn't what'd happen."

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"Yes, that would've been great, wouldn't it?" Henry said.

"Sure."

"It would've been great, me telling you all about it—that's what you would've liked, isn't it?"

"Well—sure. What d'you mean?"

"I mean that's really what made you push me that way," Henry said. "You wanted to hear all about it, if I did O.K., because nothing like that ever happened to you, and you'd rather hear about it from me that not know *anything* about it."

"Are you kidding?" Purney said. "I tried to help you out. A girl like Pratt is my idea of nothing. I wouldn't be interested. You don't think anything that might have happened to you with Pratt would've been anything new to me, do you—no matter *what*. When I was—"

"Sure, I know. Atlanta. O.K., Otie. Never mind."

Neither spoke for a moment. Then Henry said: "I won't ever get over this."

"Sure you will," Purney said. "A man can get over anything."

"Is that a fact?" Henry said.

"That's what they say," Purney said without much spirit.

"Do you want to go home?"

"Might as well," Henry said.

"You can drive if you want to," Purney said.

"No thanks, Otie," Henry said. "I guess I'd better not drive tonight. But thanks. You're a pretty good guy at that, Otie."

The next day was Sunday. On Sundays, if Henry's father didn't play golf, Henry and his mother and father always went to Poquinuck. When Henry awoke he began praying at once that it would be golf so that he would not have to go to Poquinuck. But at breakfast his father said: "We're going over to Poquinuck Island this afternoon."

"Poquinuck," Henry said. "Just Poquinuck. Nobody ever says they're going to Poquinuck *Island*."

"Is that so?" his father said. "Anyway, that's where we're going."

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Why did a middle aged man have to do anything on Sunday? Why must he, every Sunday, plod over a golf course or else make an exhibition of himself laboring round that swimming pool? Why couldn't he just stay at home and rest?

"I don't feel very well," Henry said, without any real hope. "I think I'll stay home."

"Nonsense," his father said. "We're all going."

When the Wilders went to Poquinuck *en famille*, the procedure was always the same. Henry's father, using an embarrassing old-fashioned breaststroke, would struggle up and down the pool two or three times, snorting as he went and spouting out a long stream of water when he had finished and had reached the ladder where you climbed out. Meanwhile Henry would swim and talk to his friends, and his mother would sidestroke gently about the shallow, children's end of the pool. Then they would all get out and sit in deck chairs by the side of the pool. Friends of the elder Wilders would come up and talk to them. Henry had to just sit there. He was expected to keep his mother and father company.

Purney never came to Poquinuck on Sundays. He had to spend the day with his mother, who didn't swim.

Today the Wilders had finished the swimming and were all three in their deck chairs before Jane appeared at the pool. Henry had been waiting with sick dread for this time.

Now she came out, red suit, tan body, and yellowhair, and climbed up the long ladder to the high board and prepared to practice backdives. The sight of that perfection, Henry thought, was more than he should be asked to bear today. As she stood balancing on her toes at the end of the board, her back to be length of the pool, her arms held horizontal in front of her, a frightful thought struck Henry—the one he had been barricading the doors of his mind against. It was the thought of his vision through the hole Purney had made: a bright red rash of pimples across two fields of snow. But the vision was not intolerable now. It was, he realized, a good thing to hold in reserve. He admitted it, then gently expelled it. It would always be available. It was funny that Purney, who had caused the unhappiness, had also provided

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this little remedy; for it was his hole. As long as Henry had the vision handy, he could endure anything. He could even —weary, sadly wise wayfarer that he was—watch with a wry and gentle joy in its sheer beauty the slow arc of Jane's back-dive—a perfect, careless young yellow-haired animal hanging for an instant, curving matchlessly, red, yellow, and tan against the sky, then straightening to knife into the cool green pool.

THE ECHOES

The echoes held him, hugged him, hurled him down,
And above all October seemed to shout:
'You worried you with what it's all about.
I have held stronger than you longer down.
It's only the small leaf I cannot rout
When upper branches, without breaking, bend
And wave aside the motion that I send
Across the world to try and drive you out.'

Wind shook the barren limbs from end to end.
All things on earth were whirled far up above.
He walked across the earth that buries love,
And heard the wind increase around each bend;
And still the echoes held him, but he laughed:
'Autumn will pass. The oyster hugs her pearl.
Seasons are nothing sudden in a world
Where snow will fall on leaves that fell on grass.'

—HAROLD FLEMING

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ORPHEUS

Stone lips to the unspoken cave;
Fingering the nervous strings, alone,
I crossed that grey sill, raised my head
To lift my song into the grave
Meanders of unfolding stone,
Following where the echo led
Down blind alleys of our dead.

Down the forbidden, backward street
To the lower town, condemned, asleep
In blank remembering mazes where
Smoke rose, the ashes hid my feet
And slow walls crumpled, settling deep
In rubble of the central square.
All ruin I could sound was there.

At the charred rail and windowsill,
Widows hunched in fusty shawls,
This only once the Furies wept;
The watchdog turned to hear me till
Head by head forgot its howls,
Loosed the torn images it kept,
Let sag its sore jaws and slept.

Then to my singing's radius
Seethed faces like a pauper's crowd
Or flies of an old injury.
The piteous dead who lived on us
Whined in my air, anarchic, loud
Till my soft voice that set them free,
Lost in this grievous enemy,

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Rose up and laid them in low slumbers;
I meant to see in them what dark
Powers be, what eminent plotters.
Midmost their hushed, downcast numbers
Starved Tantalus stood upright, stark,
Waistdeep where the declining waters
Swelled their tides, where Danaus' daughters

Dropped in full surf their unfilled tub;
Now leaned against his rolling stone
Slept Sisyphus beneath the hill;
That screaming half-beast, strapped to the hub,
Whom Juno's animal mist had known,
Ixion's wheel creaked and was still.
I held all hell to hear my will:

"Powers of the Underworld, who rule
All higher powers by graft or debt,
Within whose mortgage all men live:
No spy, no shining power's fool,
I think in the unthought worlds to get
The light you only freely give
Who are all bright worlds' negative.

You gave wink in an undue crime
To love—strong even here, they say.
I sing, as the blind beggars sing,
To ask of you this little time
—All lives foreclose in their due day—
That flowered bride cut down in Spring,
Struck by the snake, your underling."

In one long avenue she was
Wandering toward me, vague, uncertain,
Limping a little still, the hair
And garments tenuous as gauze
And drifting loose like a white curtain
Vacillating in black night air
That holds white lilacs, God knows where.

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"Close your eyes," said the inner ear;
"As night lookouts learn not to see
Ahead but only off one side,
As the eye's sight is never clear
But blind, dead center, you must be
Content; look not upon your bride
Till day's light lift her eyelids wide."

I turned my back to her, set out
My own way back and let her follow
Like some curious albino beast
That prowls the areas of drought,
Lured past the town's slack doors and hollow
Walls, the stream-bed lost in mist,
That breathless long climb, with no least

Doubt she must track me close behind;
As the actual scent of flesh, she must
Trail my voice unquestioning where.
Yet where the dawn first edged my mind
In one white flashing of mistrust
I turned and she, she was not there.
My hands closed upon high, thin air.

It was the nature of the thing:
No moon outlives its leaving night,
No sun its day. And I went on
Rich in the loss of all I sing
To the threshold of waking light,
To larksong and the live, grey dawn.
So, night by night, my life has gone.

—W. D. SNODGRASS

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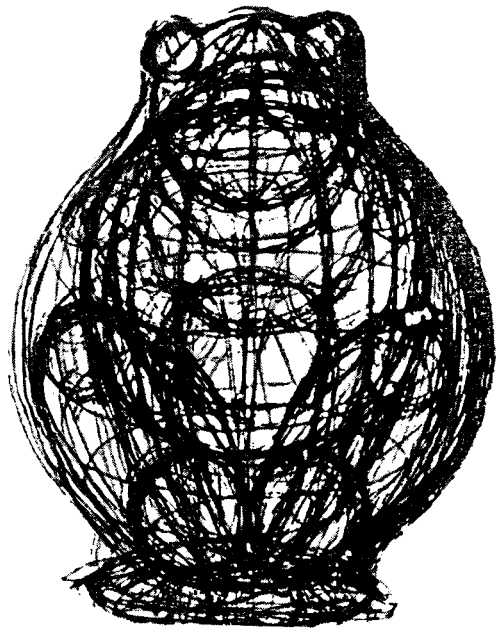

Gertrude Stein's notion, expressed in the 1930's, that someone other than Picabia would prove likely to find the sought-after "vibrant line", seems corroborated in the latest paintings of Pavel Tchelitchew. For "the russian" (as she called him, thinking of Theotocopolus) had long since begun untiring researches into the secrets of his craft. Born in Moscow in 1898, entirely self-taught, he had already painted a disturbing head of Medusa when ten years old. He left Russia in 1919 for Germany where he began to design for the theatre and immediately attracted the attention of Diaghilev, who engaged him and brought him to Paris. He gained fame here with decors, with wax-and-wire portraits (Edith Sitwell, etc.) but never relinquished his classical studies: he sought a total knowledge of the craft *of painting, of the accumulated knowledge of pigments and varnishes, of method, of rendering effects of light and shadow, indicating atmosphere—all the warehouse of Western art was his study.*

At the same time Tchelitchew considers all art magical, and his most famous theatrical productions were just that: for example the ballet Ode on the Occasion of an Eclipse of the Sun *where at the end a tremendous Klieg light was turned full-blast toward the surprised audience; or the beautiful scene in Giraudoux's* Ondine *where he contrived, by means*

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of lights concealed in translucent balustrades, an extraordinary effect of rising swirling waters.

In 1934 he went to America (becoming a citizen in 1943), had a one-man show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. His two detailed canvases, Phenomena *(1938, now at Ringling Museum, Sarasota) and* Hide and Seek *(1942, Museum of Modern Art) occupied much of his time in America, but he designed for Lincoln Kirstein's ballet (then briefly resident at the Metropolitan Opera) a new production of Gluck's* Orfeo *which galvanized the critics but proved too audacious for the staid opera-house audience, what with an Elysian Fields of floating grey-white trees and for Orpheus a crystal lyre that glowed red in Hades.*

For the last six years Tchelitchew has concerned himself with "interior landscapes"—paintings of transparent heads or figures, with luminous (and accurate) delineation of nerves and muscles. Now, in the paintings shown this season in Paris, London, New York, he reveals a new development: a series of forms of common objects become metamorphosed into dancing stellar shapes. Scorning abstraction and pitying the modern painter who has never bothered to investigate the materials of painting (far too many canvases dated after 1900 are flaking and melting) Tchelitchew yet eschews polemic and will only remark: "Image is sacred and magical, and cannot be destroyed", but thereby he insinuates that the object must be comprehended before the image can be achieved; the precision and care of execution in his paintings speak for themselves.

The pages reproduced here are metamorphic studies preceding the new paintings, and come from notebooks dated 1953–56 crowded with such interplays: a woman is a jug, and a jug is a woman, a walnut in its shell is also a brain in its skullcase, a bull is almost a bee, a gooseberry becomes a turning astrolabe. The resulting paintings offer a startling perception of some frontier of the mind where knowledge of higher mathematics and an impudent play of light spin in eternal counterplay. Lines from Sir John Davies' The Orchestra *spring to mind: "Dancing (bright Lady) first began to bee, / When the first seeds whereof the World did spring, / The fire, ayre, earth and water—did agree, / By Love's perswasion,—Nature's mighty King—, / To leave their first disordred combating; / And in a daunce such measure to observe, / As all the world their motion should preserve."*

—E. W.

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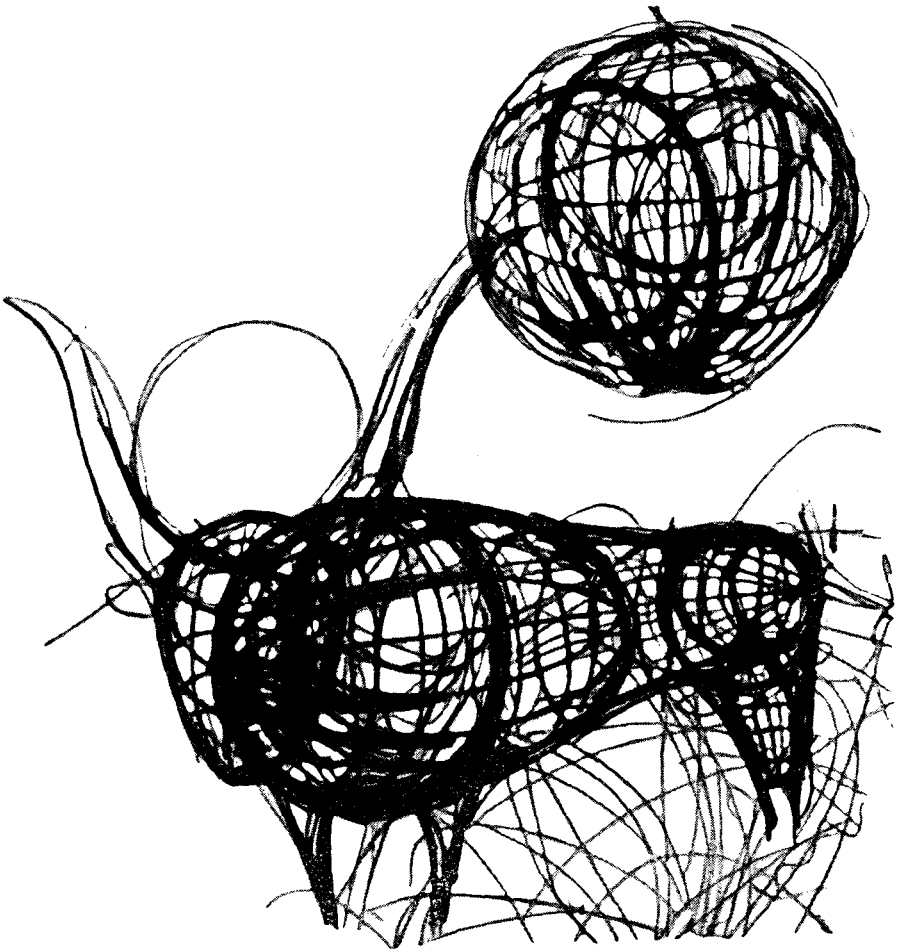

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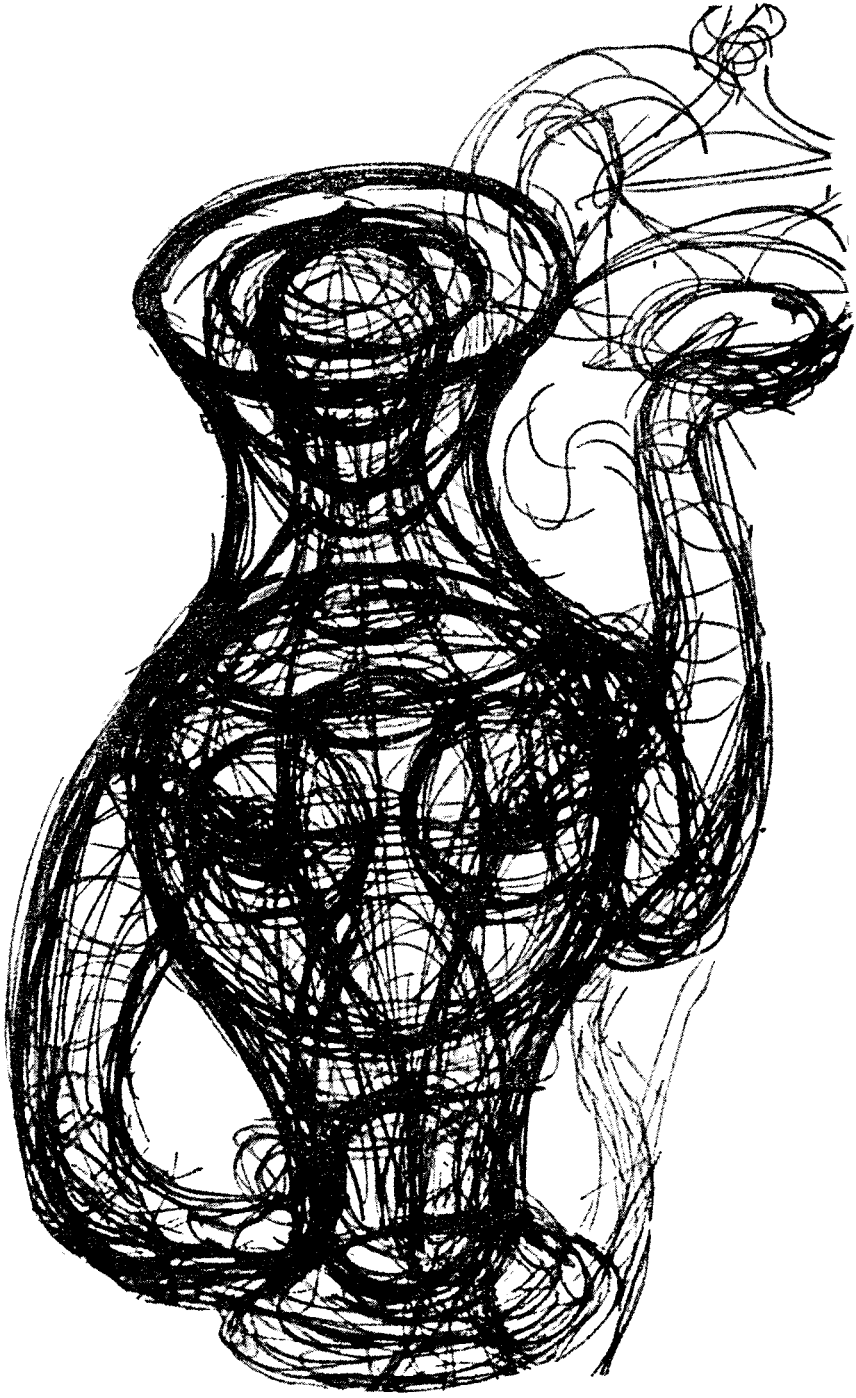

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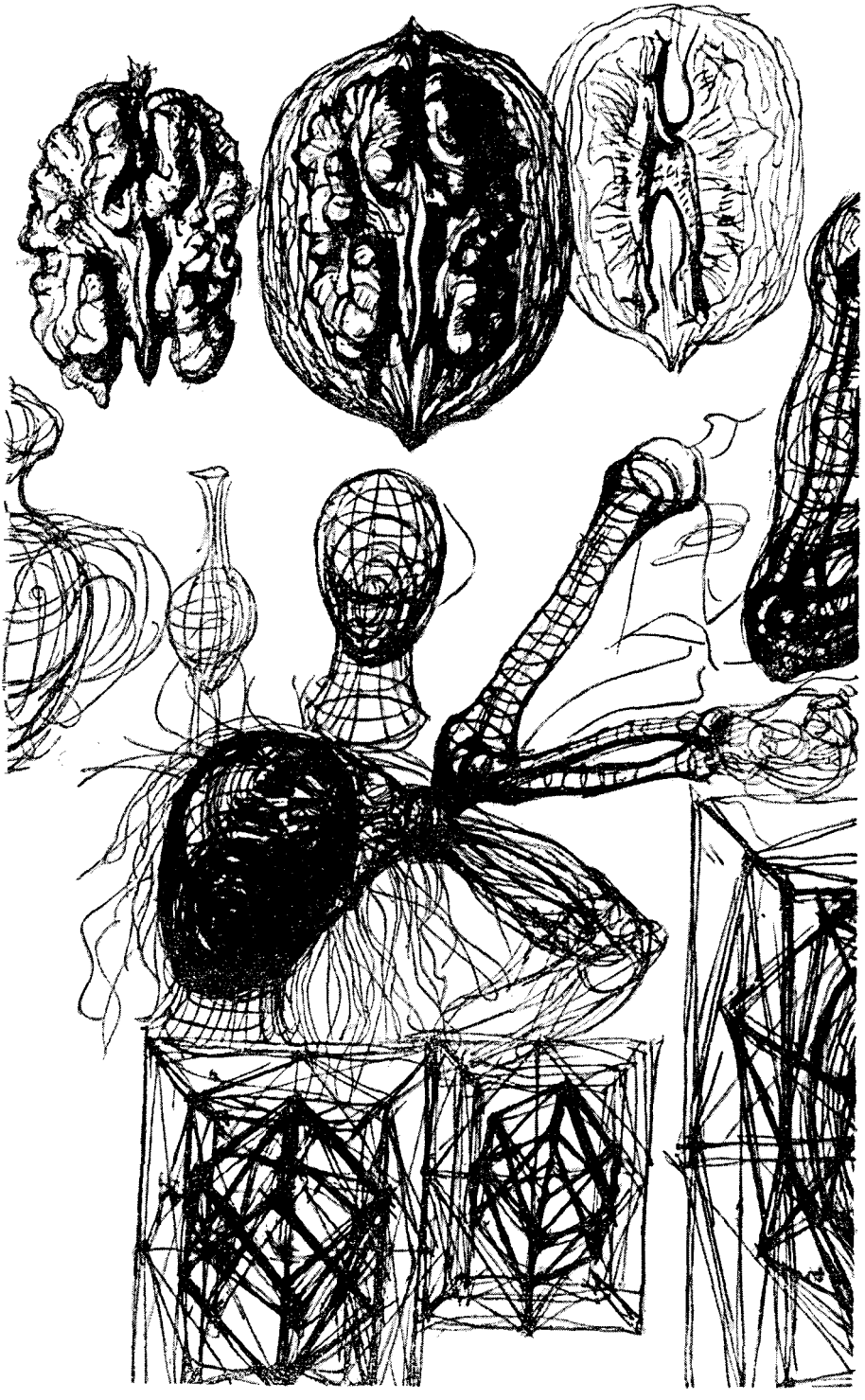

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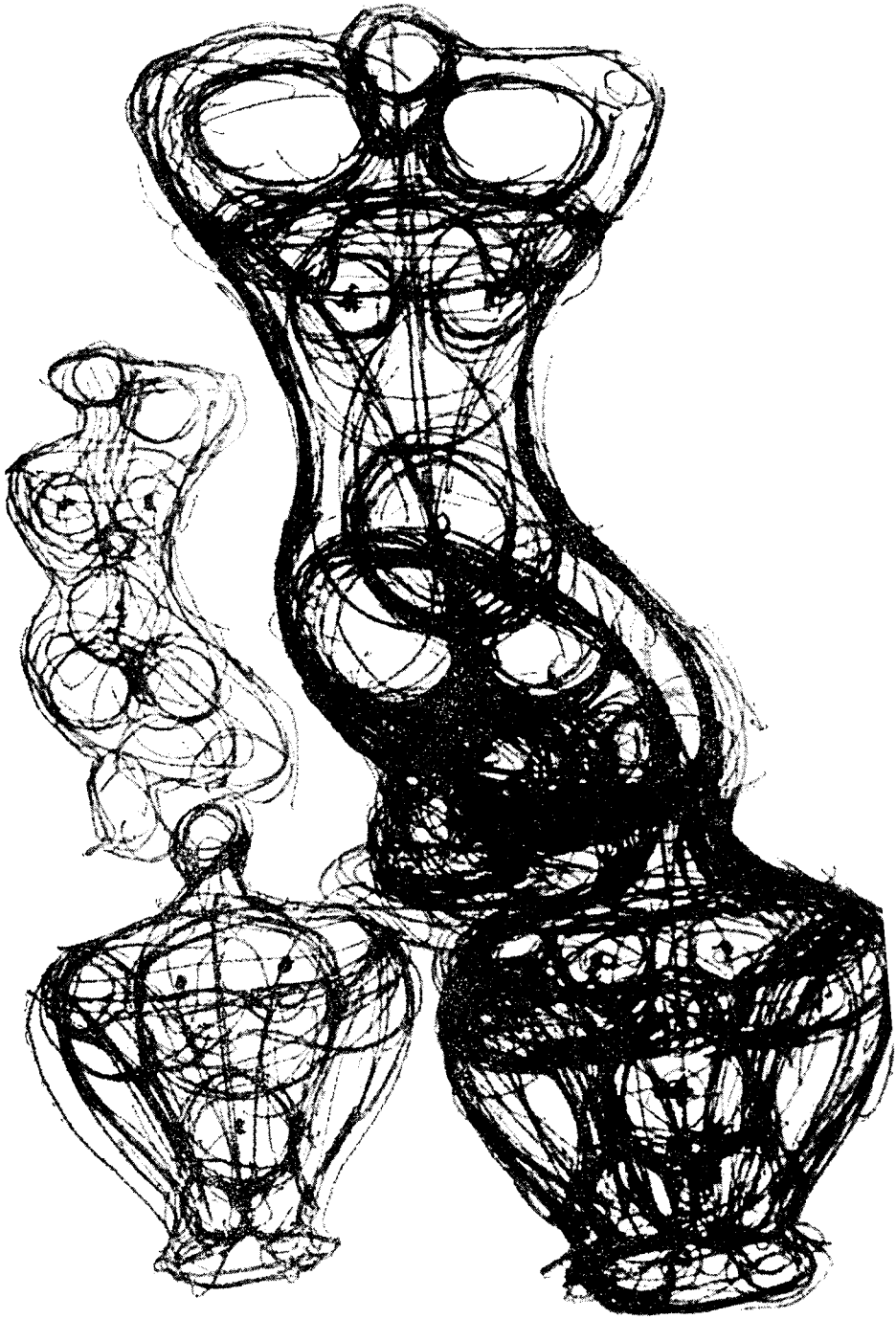

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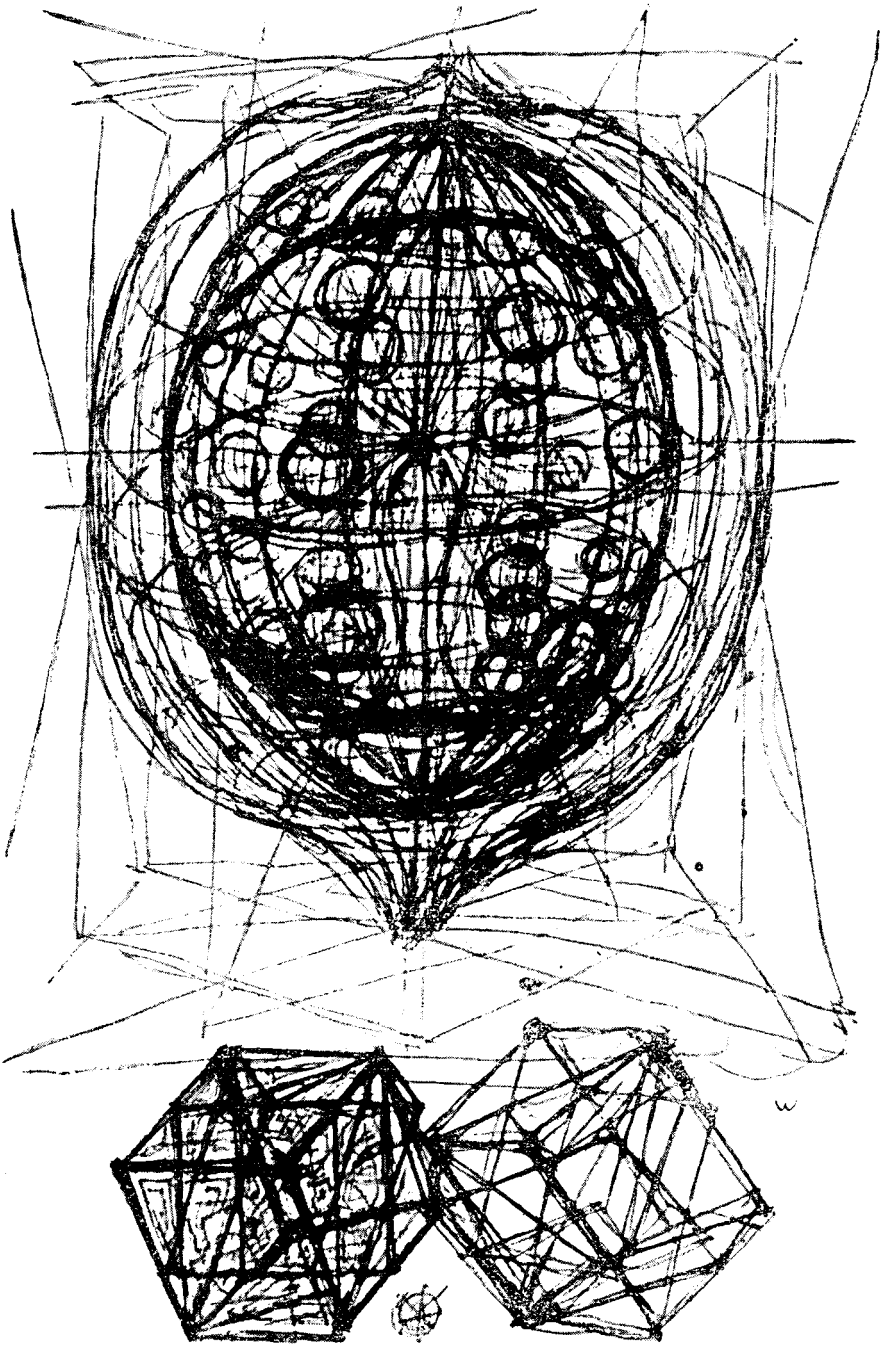

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A Variation on
"O never say that I was false of heart"

The night has made the apple tree a scent,
A motion in my ear, as if delight
Ever so softly trembled in decline.
Though, where you are, deceitful hills take flight
Into the glare that permeates each line
Between trees and their shadows, I define
Your absence by my thought's experiment,
For it is you I love and not my sight.

Yet still I feel as though the tenderness
Were mine of those who, sceptical of sense,
Yearned in the dark for nothing, those of slow
And melancholy aria, intense
And shaking with desire. They did not know
Whom rapture may address and therefore show
Desire protesting what their minds possess,
An anguish without knowledge or defense.

Suffering desires what it would not desire.
Of them we learn of its reality
Blurring the soul's two parts, and neither true
To the other, sombre twin, finality
Moving the other toward what it must do.
Nostalgic violence their speech, for two
Destroy the two who would have been entire,
In mutual death embrace serenity.

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So we have learned of love when love is lost.
But, being born, you are for me to find,
And I, because I am, may think and feel.
Nature provides such study to my mind
That it may joy to know, for all are real,
Mind, study, knowledge, you, who are the seal
Of what irreparable ignorance had cost,
More precious as I know the suffering blind,

To whom the spring in its small ghostly ways
Is their self stirring through its sleeping scene,
That, delicate with clarity and fair
With youth, echoes in waste what might have been,
Yet hates the love that is reflected there.
And they are our beginning who despair,
For wisdom marks what love deserves, and pays
With sense of loss for all that falls between.

Love is a way of knowing, possible
Only as it is separate from the known,
As to be human limits accident.
How should I love you if, apart, alone,
I not affirm seeing and seen, event
And actor from the other different?
Though in my spacious ear empty air fall
Through darkness, all I am is not undone,

For in your absence I know you to praise,
As I do patience, music, gentleness,
Faith, order, justice, and intelligence,
Which are for me to know and which will bless,
Like goodness, those who love them with the sense
Of what they are, and whose stern innocence
Awaits desire wisdom to virtue owes,
And ardently completes its happiness.

—EDGAR BOWERS

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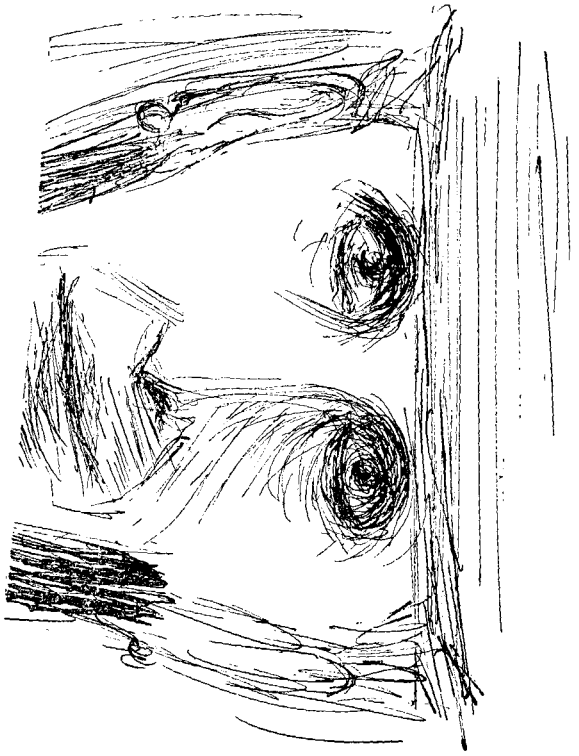
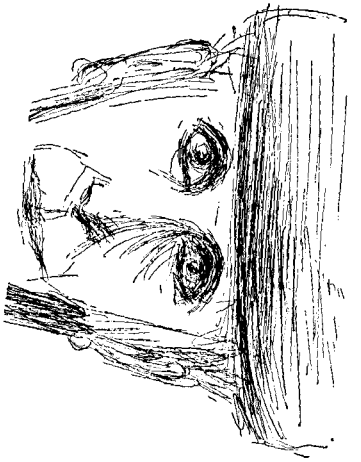
DRAWINGS BY MICHAEL BATTERBERRY





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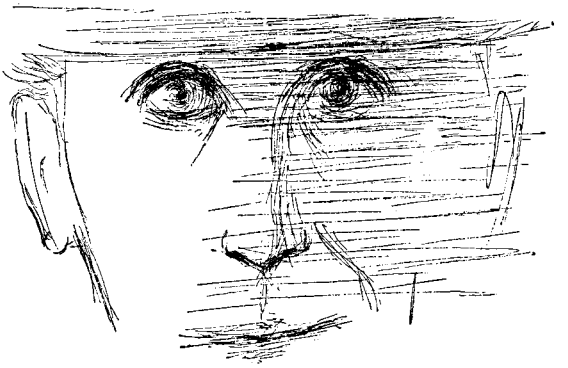

THE ART OF FICTION XIV

ISAK DINESEN

It was, in a sense, type-casting when a few years ago a film was planned that would have shown us Garbo playing the rôle of Isak Dinesen in a screen version of *Out of Africa*, for the writer is, like the actress, a Mysterious Creature of the North. Isak Dinesen is really the Danish Baroness Karen Blixen, and she is the daughter of Wilhelm Dinesen, author of a classic 19th century work *Boganis' Jagtbreve* (*A Hunter's—or Sportman's—Letters*). Baroness Blixen has writen under another name as well: a delightful novel (*T__A____A____*) she prefers not to acknowledge, though any reader with half an eye could guess the Baroness hiding behind the second, French, pseudonym. Literary circles buzz with legends about her: *she* is really a man, *he* is really a woman, "Isak Dinesen" is really a brother-and-sister in collaboration, "Isak Dinesen"

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came to America in the 70's of the last century, she is really a Parisienne, she lives at Elsinore, she stays mostly in London, she is a nun, she is very hospitable and receives young writers, she is difficult to see and lives a recluse, she writes in French, no in English, no in Danish...

In 1934 the New York publishing house of Robert Haas and Harrison Smith (which was later absorbed by Random House) brought out a book called *Seven Gothic Tales* which Mr. Haas had accepted on first reading. The cool easy perfection of its prose and the ironical and fantastical tone of the stories made it an immediate success: a book club chose it, it became a best-seller, both the literate and semi-literate reviewers raved. And when that clamor was done the book was found to be still there: a great number of writers and painters were heard discussing it with great enthusiasm, always implying the book to be of that permanency usually labelled Standard Work. In 1937 Random House issued *Out of Africa* which is the diametrical opposite of the first work: where the *Seven Gothic Tales* are flights of pure imagination and impudent humor, *Out of Africa* is a sober and touching account of life on a coffee plantation in Kenya before, during, and after the First World War. It, too, established itself immediately as a work to which devoted readers returned for a second and third time. But only after *Winter's Tales* had appeared in 1942, and when by then a new generation of readers had discovered the first book of tales, was the importance of these works generally determined. Outside the canon of modern literature like an oriole outside a cage of moulting linnets, Isak Dinesen offers to her readers the unending satisfaction of the tale told: "And then what happened?... well, then..." Her storyteller's instinct coupled with the sophisticated simplicity of her style caused Ernest Hemingway, on receiving the Nobel Prize, to suggest it should have gone to Dinesen.

An official biography would read: born 18— at Rungsted, Denmark where she has always lived in an old house once an inn frequented by the poet Ewald, schooled at home, in Switzerland and England, travelled in Holland, France, Italy,

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married her cousin Baron Blixen in Mombasa and went to live with him in Kenya. Returned to Europe, after a long absence, in 1932, worked at writing and lived in Denmark since then. Has since visited Greece, France, England, Germany, Italy and other Scandanavian countries as well.

★

SCENE ONE

Rome, Summer, 1956. The first dialogue takes place in a sidewalk restaurant in the Piazza Navona, that long space, once flooded, where mock naval battles raged. The twilight is darkening the sky to an iris color and against it the obelisk that stands amidst Bernini's fountain figures seems pale and weightless.

At a corner table sit Baroness Blixen, her secretary-travelling companion Clara Svendsen, and the interviewer. The Baroness is like a personnage from one of her own tales. Slim, straight, chic, she is dressed in back, with long black gloves and a black Parisian hat that comes forward to shadow her remarkable eyes that are lighter in color at the top than at the bottom. Her face is slender and distinguished; around her mouth and eyes play the faint ghosts of smiles, changing constantly. Her voice is pleasing, being soft, but with enough force and timbre for one to hear at once that this is a lady with opinions both of grave profundity and of most enchanting frivolity. Her companion Miss Svendsen is a fresh-faced young person with a charming smile.

ISAK DINESEN

Interview? Oh, dear...well, yes, I suppose so...but not a list of questions or a third degree, I hope...I was interviewed a short time ago...terrible...

MISS SVENDSEN

Yes, there was a man who came for a documentary film ...it was like a catechism lesson...

ISAK DINESEN

Couldn't we just talk together as we've been doing, you could write down what you like?

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INTERVIEWER

Yes, then you could scratch out some things and scribble in others.

ISAK DINESEN

Yes. I ought not to undertake too much. I've been ill for over a year and in a nursing home. I really thought I should die. I planned to die, that is I made preparations, I expected to. I even planned a last radio talk...I have made a number of radio talks on all kinds of subjects, in Denmark... they seem to enjoy me as a radio speaker there...I planned a talk on how easy it was to die...not a morbid message, I don't mean that, but a message of, well, cheer...that it was a great and lovely experience to die. But I was too ill, you know, to get it done. Now, after being so long in the nursing home and so ill, I dont feel I do really belong to this life. I feel that the world is happy and splendid and goes on, but that I'm not part of it. I've come to Rome to try and get into the world again. Oh, look at the sky now!

INTERVIEWER

Do you know Rome well? How long since you've been here?

ISAK DINESEN

A few years ago, when I had an audience with the Pope. I first came in 1912 as a young girl, staying with my cousin and best friend who was married to our Danish ambassador to Rome. We rode in the Borghese Gardens then, every day. There were carriages with all the great beauties of the day in them, and one stopped and chatted. It was delightful. Now look at these motors and motorbicycles and noise and rushing about. It's what the young today want, though: speed is the greatest thing for them. But when I think of riding my horse—I always had a horse when I was a girl—I feel that something very precious is lost to them today. They aren't acquainted with the elements or in touch with them. Everything is mechanical and urban: children are raised up without

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knowing live fire, living water, the earth. Young people want to break with the past, they hate the past, they dont want to even hear of it, and one can partly understand it, the near past to them is nothing but a long history of wars, which to them is without interest. It may be the end of something, of a kind of civilization.

INTERVIEWER

But loathe leads to love: they may be led in a circle back to a tradition. I should be frightened of indifference more.

ISAK DINESEN

Perhaps. And I myself, you know, I should like to love what they love. Now, I love jazz. I think it's the only new thing in music in my lifetime. I don't prefer it to the old music, but I enjoy it very much.

INTERVIEWER

I really have about a million things I want to ask, if you permit. For instance, about *T__A____A____*.

ISAK DINESEN

(*Laughing*). Oh, that's my illegitimate child! During the German occupation of Denmark I thought I should go mad with boredom and dullness. I wanted so to be amused, to amuse myself, and besides I was short of money, so I went to my publisher in Copenhagen and said, look here, will you give me an advance on a novel, and send me a stenographer to dictate it to? They said they would, and she appeared and I started dictating. I had no idea at all of what the story would be about when I began. I added a little every day, improvising. It was very confusing to the poor stenographer.

MISS SVENDSEN

Yes, she was used to business letters, and when she'd type the story from her shorthand notes, she'd put numbers sometimes, like "the 2 terrified girls" or "his 1 love".

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ISAK DINESEN

I'd start one day by saying "Then Mr. So-and-So entered the room," and the stenographer would cry out, "Oh, dear, but he can't. He died yesterday in Chapter Seventeen." No, I prefer to keep *T__A____A____*my secret.

INTERVIEWER

I loved it, and I remember it had excellent notices. Did many people guess that you had written it?

ISAK DINESEN

A few.

INTERVIEWER

And what about *Winter's Tales*. That came out in the midst of the war—how did you get it to America?

ISAK DINESEN

I went to Stockholm—not in itself an easy thing to accomplish—and what was even more difficult took the manuscript with me. I went to the American Embassy and asked them if they didn't have planes going to the United States every day and if they couldn't take the manuscript, but they said they only carried strictly political or diplomatic papers, so I went to the British Embassy and asked them and they asked could I supply references in England and I could (I had many friends in the Cabinet, amongst them Anthony Eden) so they cabled then said yes they could, so started the manuscript on its way to America.

INTERVIEWER

It seems a shame that the American Embassy couldn't have taken it.

ISAK DINESEN

Oh, dont be too hard on them. I owe a lot to my American public. Anyway, with the manuscript I sent a letter to my American publishers just telling them that everything was in

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their hands and that I couldn't communicate with them at all, and I never knew anything of how *Winter's Tales* was received until after the war ended, when suddenly I received dozens of charming letters from American soldiers and sailors all over the world: the book had been put into *Armed Forces Editions*—little paper books to fit a soldier's pocket. I was very touched. They sent me two copies of it; I gave one to the King of Denmark and he was pleased to see that, after all, some voice had spoken from his silent country during that dark time.

INTERVIEWER

And you were saying about your American public?

ISAK DINESEN

Yes, I shall never forget that they took me in at once. When I came back from Africa I had lost all the money I had when I married, because the farm didn't pay you know. I asked my brother to finance me for two years while I prepared *Seven Gothic Tales* and I told him that at the end of two years I'd be on my own. When the manuscript was ready I went to England and one day at luncheon there was the Editor, Mr. Huntington, and I said "Please, I have a manuscript and I wish you'd look at it." He said, "What is it?" and when I replied "A book of short stories," he threw up his hands and cried "No!" and I begged "Wont you even look at it?" and he said "A book of short stories by an unknown writer? No hope!" Then I sent it to America and it was taken right away by Robert Haas who published it, and the general public took it and liked it, and they have always been faithful. No, thank you, no more coffee, I'll have a cigarette.

INTERVIEWER

Publishers everywhere are the traditional lament of the author.

ISAK DINESEN

The amusing thing is, that after the book was published

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in America, Huntington wrote to Robert Haas praising it, and begging for the address of the author, saying he must have the book for England. He had met me as Baroness Blixen, while Mr. Haas and I had never seen one another. He never connected me with Isak Dinesen. Later he did publish the book in England.

INTERVIEWER

That's delightful; it's like something from one of the tales.

ISAK DINESEN

How lovely to sit here in the open, but we must be going I think. Shall we continue our discussion on Sunday? I should like to see the Etruscan things at the Villa Giulia: we might chat a little then. Oh, look at the moon.

INTERVIEWER

Splendid. I'll find a taxi.

★

SCENE TWO

Rainy warm Sunday noon. The Etruscan Collection in the Villa Giulia is not too crowded because of the weather.

The Baroness Blixen is now attired in a suit of reddish-brown wool and a conical ochre-colored straw hat that again shadows her extraordinary eyes. As she strolls through the newly-arranged Etruscan figures, pottery and jewelry, she seems as remote as they from the ordinary gallery-goers who are pattering through. She walks slowly, very erect, and stopping to gaze lingeringly at those details that please her.

ISAK DINESEN

How could they get that blue, do you suppose? Powdered lazuli? These animals are delightful, aren't they. I love all animals. I have a huge dog in Denmark, an Alsatian, he's enormous. I take him walking. If I survive him I think I shall get a very small dog—a pug. Though I wonder if it's possible to get a pug now. They used to be very fashionable.

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Look at the lions on that sarcophagous. How could the Etruscans have known the lion? In Africa it was the animal that I loved the most.

INTERVIEWER

You must have known Africa at its best. What made you decide to go?

ISAK DINESEN

When I was a young girl it was very far from my thoughts to go to Africa, nor did I dream then that an African farm should be the place in which I should be perfectly happy. That goes to prove that God has a greater and finer power of imagination than we have. But at the time when I was engaged to be married to my cousin Bror Blixen, an uncle of ours went out to Africa big-game hunting and came back all filled with praise of the country, so Bror and I made up our minds to try our luck there, and our relations on both side financed us in buying the farm. From my first day in Africa I loved the country and felt at home. East Africa, then, was a really a paradise, the "happy hunting-ground" of the Red Indians. I was very keen on shooting in my young days, but my great interest all through my many years in Africa was the African natives of all tribes, in particular the Somali and the Masai. They were beautiful, noble, fearless and wise people. Life out there was, I believe, rather like 18th Century England: one might often be hard up for cash, but life was still rich in many ways, with the lovely landscape, dozens of horses and dogs and a multitude of servants.

INTERVIEWER

I suppose that you began to write seriously there?

ISAK DINESEN

No, I really began writing before I went to Africa, but I never once wanted to be a writer. I published a few short stories in literary reviews in Denmark, when I was twenty years old, and the reviews encouraged me but I didn't go on—

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I dont know, I think I had an intuitive fear of being trapped. Also, when I was quite young, for a while I studied painting at the Danish Royal Academy, then I went to Paris in 1910 to study with Simon and Ménard but I did little work. The impact of Paris was too great; I felt it was more important to go about and see pictures, to see Paris in fact. I painted a little in Africa, but every time I'd get to work someone would come and say an ox has died or something and I'd have to go out in the fields. But yes, I did write there to entertain myself and I told stories constantly to the natives, all kinds of nonsense: they loved it. I'd say "Once there was a man who had an elephant with two heads," and right away the natives would say, "Oh? Yes, well, Mem-Sahib, how did he find it, and how did he manage to feed it," or whatever. They loved such invention. I delighted my people there by speaking in rime for them, they have no rime, you know, had never discovered it. I'd say things like "Wakamba na kula mamba"—"The such-and-such a tribe eats snakes" which in prose would have infuriated them, but amused them mightily in rime. Afterwards they'd say, "Please, Mem-Sahib, talk like rain," so then I knew they liked it, for rain was very precious to us there. Oh, here's Miss Svendsen. She's Catholic, so she went off today to hear a special Cardinal. Now we'll go buy some postcards. Hope there is one of the lions.

MISS SVENDSEN

Good morning.

ISAK DINESEN

Clara, you must see the delightful lions, then we'll go get some postcards and go for lunch.

Postcards are found, a taxi is summonned, umbrellas opened, the party runs for taxi, drives off through the rainy Borghese Gardens.

*

SCENE THREE

The Casino Valadier is a fashionable restaurant in the Gardens, just above the Piazza del Popolo, and commands a fine view of

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Rome. After a brief glimpse of the rain-grayed city from the flooded terrace, the party goes into a brocaded room, with considerately shaded girandoles, brightly-colored carpets and pictures, etc.

ISAK DINESEN

I'll sit here so I can see everything. (*Lights cigarette*).

INTERVIEWER

Pleasant place, isn't it?

ISAK DINESEN

Yes, very pleasant, and I recognize it. I was here in 1912. Every now and again here in Rome I recognize very vividly a place I've visited then. (*Pause*) Oh, I shall go mad!

INTERVIEWER

(*Startled*). What is it?

ISAK DINESEN

Look how crooked that picture is!
(*Indicates blackened portrait across room*).

INTERVIEWER

I'll straighten it. (*Goes to it*).

ISAK DINESEN

No, more to the right.

INTERVIEWER

Like this?

ISAK DINESEN

That's better.
(*Two solemn gentlemen at table beneath portrait indicate bewilderment.*)

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MISS SVENDSEN

It's like that at home. So much traffic passes, and I have always to straighten the pictures.

(*Waiter takes order, luncheon is served.*)

ISAK DINESEN

I'll have a cigarette now. Do you mind if we just stay here for a while? I hate to change once I'm installed in a décor I like. People are always telling me to hurry up, or come on and do this or do that.

INTERVIEWER

I think you must be Southern at heart.

ISAK DINESEN

Could be. Once when I was sailing around the Cape of Good Hope and there were albatrosses, people kept saying "Why do you stay on deck? Come on in," they said, "it's time for lunch" and I said "Damn lunch," I said "I can eat lunch any day, but I shan't see albatrosses again." Such wingspread!

INTERVIEWER

Tell me something about the writing of *Seven Gothic Tales*.

ISAK DINESEN

(*Laughing*). I just happened to write them.

INTERVIEWER

How did you happen to write them in English?

ISAK DINESEN

Well, it was quite natural to do so. I had been seeing only English people in Africa really, I had spoken English or Swahili for twenty years—after all, I was partly schooled in England, and I dont know, I had begun to think in English.

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INTERVIEWER

Oh, yes, and I wanted to ask you about your father.

ISAK DINESEN

He was in the French army, as was my grandfather. After the Franco-Prussian War, he went to America and lived with the Plains Indians in the great middle part of your country. He built himself a little hut and named it after a place in Denmark where he had been very happy as a young man—Frydenlund. He hunted animals for their skins, and became a fur-trader. He sold his skins mostly to the Indians, then used his profits to buy them gifts. A little community grew up around him, and now Frydenlund is, I believe, the name of a locality in the state of Wisconsin. When he returned to Denmark he wrote his books. So you see, it was natural for me, his daughter, to go to Africa and live with the natives, and after, return home to write about it. He also, incidentally, wrote a volume of his war experiences called *Paris Under the Commune*.

INTERVIEWER

Can you tell me your plans: what are you writing now?

ISAK DINESEN

A tremendously long novel made up of connected short tales: about two hundred of them. Also a little book called *Anecdotes of Destiny*. I should like for them both to appear in the Autumn of 1957, if I finish them in time.

INTERVIEWER

Do you ever write poetry?

ISAK DINESEN

I did as a young girl.

INTERVIEWER

What is your favorite fruit?

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ISAK DINESEN

Strawberries.

INTERVIEWER

Do you like monkeys?

ISAK DINESEN

Yes, I love them in art: in pictures, in stories, in porcelain, but not in life, they somehow look so sad. They make me nervous. I like lions and gazelles.

★

SCENE FOUR

On the parapets of the central tower of the Castle of Sermoneta, perched on a hill, amidst its clustering little town, about an hour and a half south of Rome, Below, the Pontine plain stretches green and gold to the sea, bathed in bright afternoon sunlight. The party has been seeing remains of 14the Century frescoes as well as sgraffiti scratched on the walls by Napoleonic soldiers. Now they shade their eyes to see tiny figures miles below working in the bean-fields and the peach orchards.

INTERVIEWER

I think it curious that practically no critic nor reviewer in either America or England has pointed out the great comic element in your works. I hoped we might talk a little of the comic spirit in your stories.

ISAK DINESEN

Oh, I'm glad you mention that! People are always asking me what is the significance of this or that in the tales—"What does this symbolize? What does that stand for?" and I always have a difficult time making them believe that I intend everything as it's stated. It would be terrible if the explanation of the work were outside the work itself. And I do often intend a comic sense, I love a joke, I love the humorous. I often think that what we most need now is a great humorist.

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INTERVIEWER

What humorists in the English language please you?

ISAK DINESEN

Well, Mark Twain, for example. But then all the writers I admire usually have a vein of comic spirit. Writers of tales always do, at least.

INTERVIEWER

Who are the writers of tales that appeal to you, or with whom you feel a kinship?

ISAK DINESEN

E. T. A. Hoffman, Hans Andersen, Barbey D'Aurévilly, La Motte Fouqué, Chamisso, Turgeniev, Hemingway, Maupassant, Stendhal, Chekov, Conrad, Voltaire...

INTERVIEWER

You've read them all!

ISAK DINESEN

I am really three thousand years old, and have dined with Socrates.

INTERVIEWER

Pardon?

ISAK DINESEN

(*Laughing and lighting a cigarette*). Because I was never told what I must read or what I mustn't read. I did read everything that fell into my hands. I discovered Shakespeare very early in life, and now I feel that life would be nothing without him. One of my new stories is about a company of actors playing *The Tempest*, incidentally. I love some of the Victorian novelists no one reads anymore: Walter Scott for instance. Oh, and I like Melville very much, and the Odyssey, the Norse Sagas—have you read the Norse Sagas? I love Racine, too.

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INTERVIEWER

I remember your observation on the Norse mythology in one of the *Winter's Tales**. It's very interesting to me, incidentally, how you have chosen the tale for your form.

ISAK DINESEN

It came natural to me. My literary friends at home tell me that the heart of my work is not the idea, nor the mood, but the tale. Something you can tell. Like one can *tell Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* but one could never *tell Anna Karenina.*

INTERVIEWER

I should be most interested to know a little of how you work; for instance, how such a tale as *The Deluge at Norderney* took shape. It seems so ordered and inevitable, yet on study one is amazed at the design, of the tales-within-the-tale.

ISAK DINESEN

(*Smiling mischievously*). Read it, read it, and you'll see how it's written.

* * *

EPILOGUE

For epilogue here, it is well to append an extraordinary passage from the manuscript of the novel *Albondocani* on which the Baroness has been working for some time. It deals with the enigmatic and inexplicable nature of the story-teller's art. An old woman who earns her living by story-telling is speaking:

("And I have wondered, while I read," says the young nobleman in* Sorrow-Acre, *"that we have not till now understood how much our Nordic mythology in moral greatness surpasses that of Greece and Rome. If it had not been for the physical beauty of the ancient gods, which has come down to us in marble, no modern mind could hold them worthy of worship. They were mean, capricious and treacherous. The gods of our Danish forefathers are as much more divine than they as the Druid is nobler than the Augur.")*

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"With my grandmother," she said, "I went through a hard school. 'Be loyal to the story,' the old hag would say to me. 'Be eternally and unswervingly loyal to the story.' 'Why must I be that, Grandmother?' I asked her. 'Am I to furnish you with reasons, baggage?' she cried. 'And you mean to be a story-teller! Why, you are to become a story-teller, and I shall give you the reasons! Hear then: Where the story-teller is loyal, eternally and unswervingly loyal to the story, there, in the end, silence will speak. Where the story has been betrayed, silence is but emptiness. But we, the faithful, when we have spoken our last word, will hear the voice of silence. Whether a small snotty lass understands it or not.'

"Who, then," she continues, "tells a finer tale than any of us? Silence does. And where does one read a deeper tale than upon the most perfectly printed page of the most precious book? Upon the blank page. When a royal and gallant pen, in the moment of its highest inspiration, has written down its tale with the rarest ink of all—where, then, may one read a still deeper, sweeter, merrier, and more cruel tale than that? Upon the blank page."

—EUGENE WALTER

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(This is the fourteenth in a series on the Art of Fiction. Authors interviewed have included E. M. Forster, François Mauriac, Graham Greene, William Styron, Irwin Shaw, Alberto Moravia, Joyce Cary, Ralph Ellison, Georges Simenon, James Thurber, Nelson Algren, William Faulkner and Dorothy Parker The next interview, in the winter 1956 issue, will be with Ernest Hemingway.)

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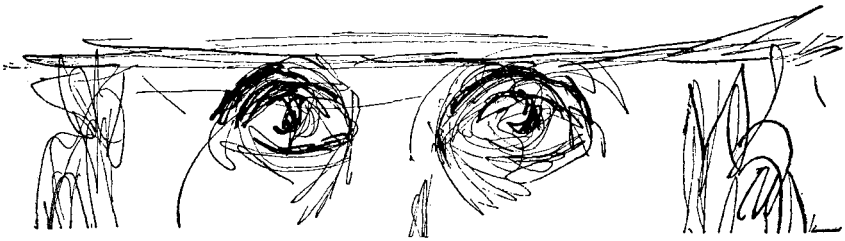

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1937 OUT OF AFRICA (Den Afrikanske Farm.)

1942 WINTER'S TALES (Vinter-Eventyr.)

1947 T—A——A——

1949 BABETTE'S FEAST (Babette's Gaestebud). Published in an American review, issued as small book in Danish.

1955 THE GHOST HORSES (Spøgelseshestene.) Published in an American review, issued as small book in Danish.

Works Published Only in Danish

1938 KARYATIDERNE (The Caryatids. An Unfinished Gothic Tale.)

1950 FARAH.

1951 DAGUERREOTYPIER (Daguerreotypes.)

1952 KARDINALENS TREDIE HISTORIE (The Cardinal's Third Tale, a Chapter from ALBONDOCANI. Illustrated by Erik Clemmesen.)

1953 EN BAALTALE (A Bonfire, a speech.)

Works in Progress

ALBONDOCANI, a novel.

LAST TALES.

ANECDOTES OF DESTINY.

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MERELY LOOKING

Back to her own devices now she turns,
Watches the objects shadowed by their stillness;
The vase stands upright where the first light falls,
  The picture leans on its own shade.
"But this" she thinks "Is nothing I have made,
I only am the breath between these walls."

And standing still she tries to make herself
Believe that objects are immune from thought,
That suffering cannot disturb the still
  Vase, that pictures where they hang
Can never prove a feeling right or wrong.
Yet such convictions falter where the will

Is still intent on suffering. She can
Even by merely looking furnish all
The room with pain. Where shadows must abound
  Thrown by the vase or furniture
She seems to feel the whole room breathe and stir
As though her own emotions gathered round.

—ELIZABETH JENNINGS

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TWO POEMS BY ROGER HECHT

A CANDLE FOR THE NIGHT

'He who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments, and in stronger and better light than his perishing mortal eye can see, does not imagine at all.' —BLAKE

In black and green and white one candle burns
Upon some pages, under a lute that leans
Against a wall. Outside the window pine
Branches hang descending where dark turns
In unstarred blackness, though nearby, we know,
Ripe figs demand tongue, the ready wine
Floats in a bottle, and the salad greens
Slowly towards perfection as the night,
Outside and near, ascends the shores of light,
Faraway, that bear all greens that grow.

The lute will thrum, the pine will drop and drip
A heavy liquid on the needled ground,
And we will eat too much. How each exceeds
Nature's excess closes the dry mouth-tip
Of one who'd share available ideals.
The country's Italy: the olive needs
Much water to show silver leaves. No sound
Or act disturbs the growing beautiful. This green
Needs care or vision to be seen
In New York City where green dries and peels.

So sight betrays whatever's overdone
By being seen too thoroughly: so touch
Upon the lute, or reading a stray page
Underneath the candle. But everyone,
Dear Enid and Isaih, has been seen
In flowering excess that will engage
More than the reasonable, the overmuch,
That's natural as black and green and white
Lute and pages. A candle for the night
Asserts the hope of day, the always green.

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AMERICANS ABROAD: OFF PERCE ROCK

Tourists would photograph
The sky's long ribs in their eagerness
To snatch the whole
Sense of the world. Yet one can see they miss
The spiralled twisting of a barberpole,
The autumn woods in their full leaflessness,
The clown's gigantic gloom and sudden laugh,
The engine's surge of steam and rising hiss,
And man's dim soul

That hides under the skin.
With thoroughness they aim their sight,
Near the bronzed cliff,
At what they've never seen and can't take back
As property or purchase. But the slight
Yellow on gannet's wings when spread out stiff
Before skimming the water seems a sin,
A waste of nature on the film they crack
With awed delight.

For gadgets satisfy
Their thirst for art: steel will endure
Longer than song.
I have no iron to support my joke,
But words. What is a living worth? Art's long
And devious backroad is not weedpure;
Many have hayfever. And who am I,
As they might ask, to battle with the stroke,
The timed and sure

Clicking of the nosy lens?
In my defense I won't debate;
But there is this:
The world cannot be owned by snapshots, and
What's human stays beyond the emphasis
Of light and dark. So when the snapping gate
Of a black box tenses, I'll watch the men's
Drooping eyelids flutter as the near land
Hurries our fate.

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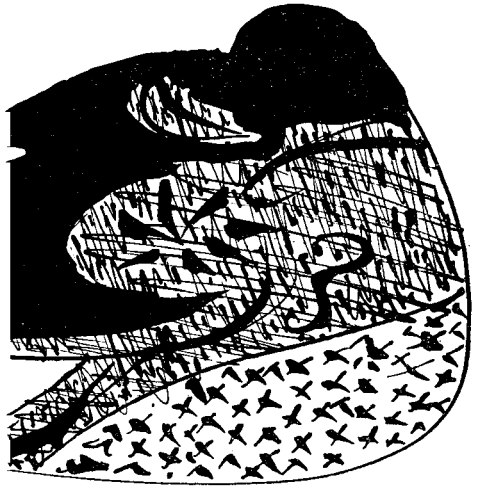
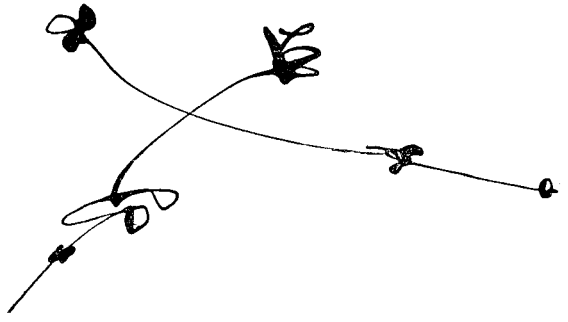
Masson





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André Masson . . .

Though one knows that André Masson, one of France's foremost artists, started painting in those already distant years when cubism triumphed and that he participated, as few did, in the now almost equally remote surrealist attempt to hoist new mythologies from the unconscious, one cannot help but think of him as youthful. That is because today as much as ever he is a man who searches rather than finds: —or better: whose best finds are in the searching. Masson aspires to completeness even at the risk of tensions and conflicts. He is a diver into the soul's darkness who is also one of today's rare intellectual painters. Relentless anxiety and insatable curiosity drive him on. No sooner has he caught the image of the dryad than he longs for that of the tree, and under his brush or pen the contours of ordinary objects may tend at any time to take on the air of some ominous writing on the wall. All things are forever in vehement turmoil, in fiery transition. A hill will turn into a woman, then into an insect, and finally take to flight as some unspeakable divinity. This constant flux, this panting change might easily engender aesthetic confusion. Not so: Masson always remains on top of the threatening wave. At every turn, he finds the appropriate though temporary formulas with lightning speed. And he finds them within him: in that unvarying ability to probe the surface of paper or canvas with swift, feverish, unhesitating gestures that summon forth the saving image. He thus brings constancy to change. Masson exorcizes his—and our age's—torment: under his fingers the weight of restlessness becomes the elation of metamorphosis.

—Pierre Schneider

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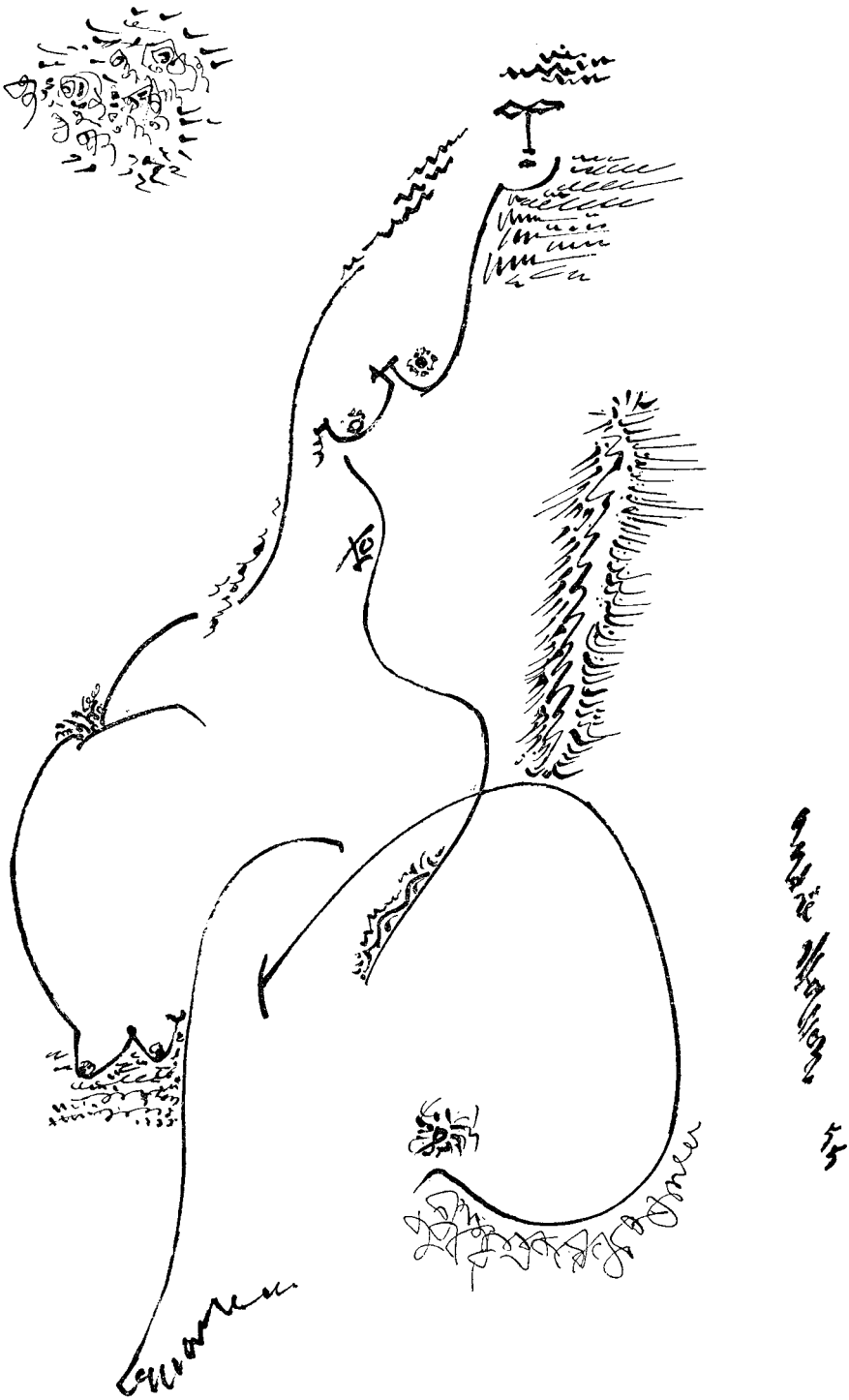

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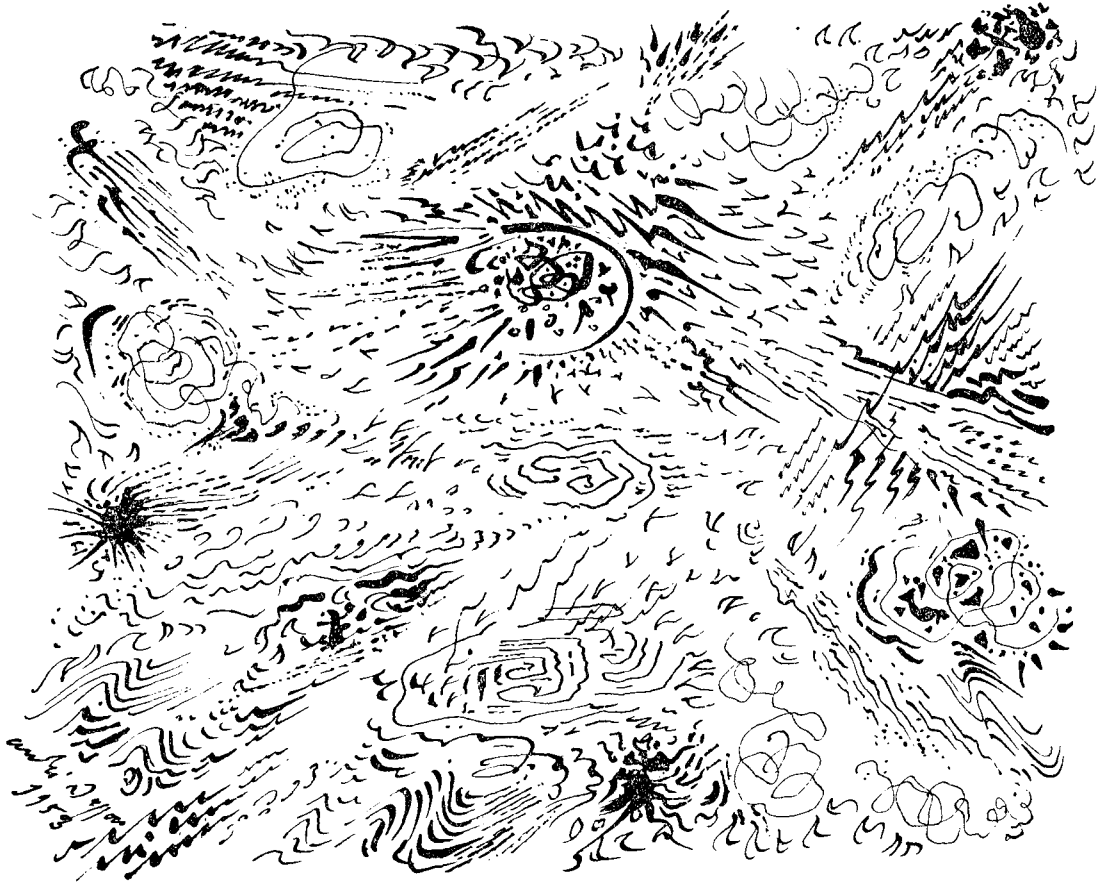

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ETUDE

Another night of lunacy!
Another full and drunken moon
And I the dwarf and she the bear
To animate the sad cartoon.

It's too bad she's an animal—
A trained observer of my ways
Forced to amuse an unskilled mob
Expectorating whistling praise.

She doesn't even hibernate
But helps me grub along all year—
Living off peanuts thrown to her
A bleak comedian, I fear.

Just watch her playing. She performs
The lies she memorized from me
So well that she believes and thrives
In fact, grows fat from phantasy...

Another night! My bear, my work
My huge, well-meaning last big chance
The spotlight of the moon is on
Us once again. Don't fail me: dance!

—RICHARD O'CONNELL

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LAWRENCE STURHAHN

THE DEMOCRAT

THE land was flat, almost barren, the grass grown wild and untended between the trees which stood spread like outpost sentinels, lonely under the immense sky. He hadn't seen another car, or a house for many miles, and now he was driving very fast on the straight cement road with the black strip of tar down its center. He drew a strange exhilaration from the sound of the engine and the wind roaring around the car; and rushing across this flat land, he felt separate and alone from all people, unresponsible. Then, far ahead, he saw the cross roads and the hitch-hiker standing there, with the suitcase beside him.

I'll pick him up, he thought, deciding quickly, already almost upon the man; and passing him, still slowing the car from high speed, he saw the man sharply for an instant, his coat and tie blowing in the wind and the bright, sunburst decal on the side of the suitcase. When he had stopped the old man came hurrying to the car, which the driver backed to meet him. And he opened the door, putting the cardboard suitcase with the cheap tin clasps—such as you see in Army-Navy Stores, hung up on racks and always reduced from some maximum price to some minimum one—in the back seat, and got heavily in the car, saying he was going to Tampa.

"Going as far as Sarasota. I'll take you that far."

"Thank you, son," the old man said.

He started talking immediately then; about the weather, and of how he'd served in the first World War, and the driver looking at him, saw the withered flesh of his face, the white, shiny scartissue.

"After the war," the old man said, "I come back and got

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work in the penitentiary. Knew a whole lot about guns—hate them though, son, I had to carry them so much. When a man packs a gun all his life, and if sometimes he have to use it, it gets so he changes, you know what I mean, boy? It changes him, makes him different, like I say."

They were coming up on another car then, and the hitch-hiker stopped talking suddenly, looking intently at it.

"Take it easy," he said, "you want to watch a guy with tags like that. Might be he's some sort of cop. You see that there X on his tag?"

The driver slowed obligingly, seeing nothing in the other car, which had two children looking out the back window.

"He looks alright," the hitch-hiker said in a minute. The car was an ordinary stock sedan and the driver passed it and pulled away, accelerating again. "You can't never tell about them Xs," the old man said, sitting back in his seat.

"Like I say, it changes a man always having to carry a gun. Like this'n here, you see?" The driver looked down and saw the heavy pistol he was holding gently in his hand. "I allus carry it," he said. And he smiled as he put it back inside his coat.

"You mind if I smoke, son?"

The driver shook his head, feeling the uncertainty in the car now, the sudden shift of emphasis which the presence of the pistol had brought about. He looks friendly enough, at least not unfriendly, the driver thought, it is hard to tell.

"They's some that do," the old man said, lighting his cigarette with a kitchen match, "though I never saw no harm in it myself. I like to ask, 'specially when I'm in another man's car."

"I ike I was saying, I live in Florida all my life, working over to the penitentiary after the war, going out with the road gangs."

"The chain gangs?" the driver asked. They had come into a settled area: there were houses by the road, and he saw the rural mail-man driving from box to box, leaning across his front seat to push the mail through the open off-side window. A pretty teen-aged girl was standing by one of the boxes,

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waiting. Yet a fear existed, amorphous, unspecified; a dark incubus that had come with the old man, disquieting him.

"You might call them that," the hitch-hiker said, nodding his head gravely. "It's a damn sight better'n on the wall walking in the hot sun. On the road you ride the trucks where the wind'll cool you—you seen them with the convicts in the cage on the back, and the other truck following with the guard on the cab roof with a sawed-off 12 gauge. You seen them? Well, that there was me," he said proudly. "It aint so lonely; you git to be friendly like with them."

"It's a good way to build a road, I guess."

"You're right, sure right."

They were coming into Ft. Meyer and the driver slowed down. It was a quiet town with tall palms along the streets and green lawns in front of the houses. And then they turned north again, crossing the bay on a long silver bridge, while beneath them the water was broken and choppy under the steady Gulf wind.

"This here river," the old man said, "reminds me of once I was in the north, near Tallahassee it was—living up there at the time—it was a Sunday and I was fishing up the river a piece, just moving slow in my punt. It was some hot that day, I'll say, and I was sticking close to the bank trying to keep in some lee—where them trees hang out over the water real thick. When I hears a scratching in the brush and somebody saying:

—you better keep moving along there, buddy.

"So I laughed thinking they was having a joke, or maybe there was a kid with his sweetie, all nekkid, you know; it was the same to me. I wasn't bothering no one at all. So I laugh, 'n this kid about as old as you, he steps out of the brush and holds a sawed-off shotgun on me."

"You ever hold a gun on a man, son, 'n know you could pull that trigga and shoot him down? It's what I say about making a man different. You got to have a kind of experience to handle it—so you don't shoot no man by accident, you see what I mean. But not this kid, he didn't have no experience. He could of shot me without him having any excuse—

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it's like that in the beginning— and I was scared."

—you hear what I say, the kid says, you better bug out.

—kid, I'm minding my business doing a little fishing. Don't go fooling with me.

"It was then I started to smell the woodsmoke and I figure it's a still."

—hell, what you got, boy, a still? Don't make a difference to me; I probably bought some of your brew. You just go along and I won't tell no living soul.

—mister, move on. I'm counting and then I'm shooting.

—this here's a free river, boy. I'm fishing and doing you no harm. You just fade off in that brush and I'll forget you held a gun on me or said a lot of fool things.

"Maybe a man shouldn't never get mad," the hitch-hiker said slowly, "maybe it won't never do any good, and just naturally leads to grief. If I was to say anything at all I guess I'd say that first. But I was getting mad then, like I had no control. I was getting that mad and the kid was scared 'n liable to gun me down. I could smell it in him. It was a free river and he was telling me to get off it. He was running a still and I aint got nothing against that excepting what they does is cheat the government, and I wouldn't care nothing about that except that cheating the government out of the tax means another man got to pay it. Who's that? That's you 'n me, boy. In the end, we's the ones getting reamed. I don't know," he said slowly, "it comes to me now that I didn't have no real choice. A man naturally gets mad. Aint that so, son? I didn't have no real choice, did I? You tell me."

"No," the driver said, "I guess you didn't."

"The way he waving that gun around he act like a Georgia boy to me, excitable like they is, and unthinking. You aint a Georgia boy, son?"

"No," he said, "I'm from New York."

"Yankee, eh? They's more Yankess than anybody in this here state, I tell you, though most of them not as young as you."

"This boy though, he's fine strung. Georgia boy sure as shooting I could tell. He says to me:

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—you take up them oars and row that tub out of here. Right now, hear? On three I'm pulling this trigga and this gun aint got no rock salt in it, I'll clue you.

—pull that, you little sonofabitch, 'n you'll wish you was born of another mother.

—what'd you say? What'd you say? this kid yells.

"I seen him start to raise the gun, so I give her a hard scull with the oar I'm holding; sametime I duck into the bottom."

"That gun went off, bawaanng... right over me, close enough to feel wind of them shot. So I take my pistol and sticking it over the side, I lets one go. I know he's scared then because he fires his other barrel without him even seeing me. And his guns empty then so I stand up, holding that pistol, and looking at him. I could of killed him right then, but he took off into the brush."

"I was mad, boy, crazy kind of mad. They telling me to move off and then that still. They was rights I had for being an American, wasn't there? What the hell I get shot up in a war for, boy? I ask you? Am I right or wrong? You tell me, about the war 'n all, right or wrong?"

The driver nodded, listening intently.

"I move out then," the old man said. "I move down stream and pulling in, I went into the woods. I move pretty fast and quiet in them woods and pretty soon I comes on a smell of that smoke again, and a kind of a road running through that brush; directly I almost break out in the clearing where I see the three of them standing round. The kid has the gun and the other's talking to him, nervous like and quick. I give a big yell and everything quits while they look all around and then this kid pulls up the gun. I reach around my tree and fires and the pistol jumping in my hand, it scares me. You know why, boy? It scares me because I like the way it feels. The kid fires then, and I hear the shot a rattling round me in the brush, and I step out from that tree then, and holding down with two hands I dropped him."

"I thought right then, that's a good shot; and them other two light out leaving the kid screaming and churning on the

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ground, till one come back and taking him by the arms, he pulls him along while the other is hunkered down by the truck. I could of got him easy. I could of killed the three of them right then." The hitch-hiker paused, thinking about it, and then he said, very seriously. "I could of killed the three of them, and I most wanted to."

"Holy smokes," the driver said.

"They pull him into that pick-up and skidded out of there, in second, up that mud track. I'm standing there, laughing, son. It seemed funny to me then."

"But that aint all," he went on, "you know what I did then?"

"What?" the driver asked, thinking that it wasn't possible to have done much more.

"I went and I look over this outfit they had. It was right big—boiler and run-off vats and a shack where they had it put up up in nice wooden barrels. So, I took 'n shot that boiler full of holes. I smash up them coils. I go in the shack and stove in them barrels. They was another gun in there 'n I took and broke the stock offen it against a tree, bent them barrels round a rock. By then I had raw whisky running ass-high all over so I took the kerosene they had for lighting the fire. I spread it around and lit the whole shebang. That fire sure burned good on whisky, son, about half them woods is burning when I left." He was finally, morosely silent.

"My God, that's quite a story," the driver said.

"Boy, that there aint no story, that's God's honest truth."

Now, near the coast, the land was crowded and there were houses, small and poor, set back from the road. There was a billboard reading: 'Visit Crystal Springs Where The Waters Are Best For *You*,' with the picture of a girl in a tiger-skin bathing suit. The sun was gone and the clouds had come into the sky; the wind was blowing, clutching at the palms and the sharp, evil bayonet grass along the road.

"I moved out of that county, son, right then."

"I don't blame you," the driver said.

"That kid I shot," the hitch-hiker said, not hearing him, "he was the sheriff's son. Can you beat it, the whole kit and caboodle belong to the Sheriff."

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"You were lucky then."

"Was having a drink in a roadhouse along there and a state trooper come in I knows. He tells me, says the sheriff's looking for me, but he's afraid to push it out of the county. Everybody thinks it pretty funny, the trooper says; and I guess it was, except for the kid I shot. He ended up crippled."

Oh Jesus, the driver thought, in the army you heard all kinds of stories, about the women and the liquor and the brawling. Nobody would ever admit to any fear, except, perhaps, that it was smart to be afraid of combat, even afraid enough to run... But you half believed that nobody ever really told the truth about any of it.

"I was lucky, it's true," the old man said, "must be I live right. They's people now who'd kill me if they saw me. So I allus got this gun. I show you this here gun?" He had it out of his coat again, and was holding it cradled protectively in his hand, "I show you this, didn't I?"

"Yes," the driver said, "yes, I saw it." Or maybe some of what was told, he thought, maybe some of it was also true.

"It sure is funny," the old man mused, thinking about it, "how it all works out. One thing leading to the next and the boy he's crippled for life. Seems one thing always leads to another, don't it? As though there aint much a man can do about it. Aint that so, son? You ever go to one of them colleges so's you could learn why things work like they do?"

"Yes," said the driver, "I went to college before I went in the service."

"What do they call that? I mean they got a name for it, don't they?"

"When a man is trapped and has no choice, you mean? Determinism," he said, "I guess that's it."

"Yeah, well that sound like something. A man should listen hard when he hears them things. I been around a whole lot but I reckon I don't know much about them things. Nor most anything, I guess," he said sadly. "I sure would like to know." He was silent a moment. "All I got is the war. Was you in the war, son?"

"Yes," the driver said, "I was in a war," thinking, why

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does he ask me this. Why should I have to answer his damned questions? The malaise settled in him now.

"Well," the hitch-hiker said, looking at him, "I guess what's important a man should know what he wants, how he's gonna live. Aint that true?"

"Yes, I guess so. No," he said sharply, "no, I don't know," denying it all.

"Someday somebody'll show me," the old man said with conviction, and then he was silent while they drove into Sarasota, past all the pretty white resort houses, and down into the town, and after this very long silence he said, as a complete thought in itself. "Maybe."

And the driver said, "I'll take you on through town, put you on the road north."

The old man was silent again until finally the car had stopped and then he got out, taking the suitcase with the garish decal on it.

"I sure do appreciate this lift you give me," he said. "They's people who wouldn't pick up a man looks as bad as I do. Good luck to you, boy," the old man said, standing outside the car, "God bless you."

The driver turned the car around then, leaving him standing on the Tamiami Trail north with the suitcase and the revolver which shielded him; and looking back once he saw the man waiting, while the cars passed him going to Tampa, and then the driver found he was gripping the steering wheel so hard there was pain in his fingers.

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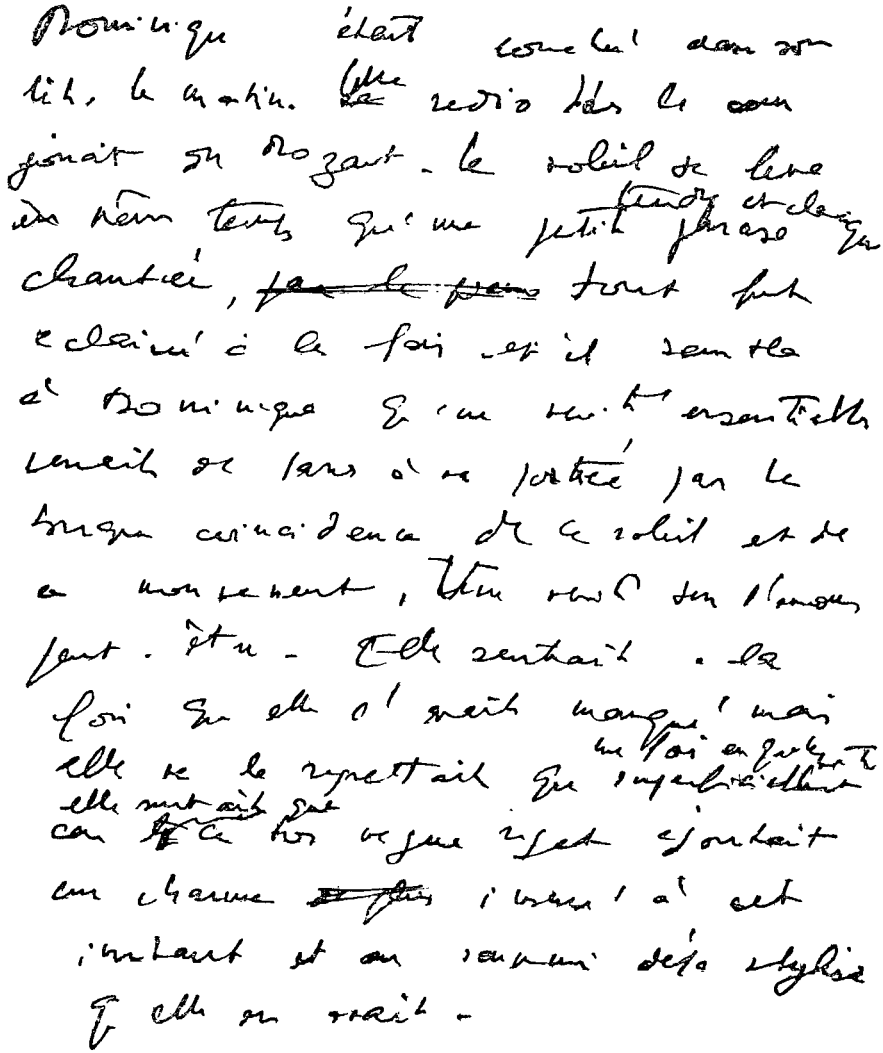

One of the final manuscript pages from Françoise Sagan's Un Certain Sourire.

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Sketches by Ivy Nicholson

THE ART OF FICTION XV

FRANÇOISE SAGAN

(This is the second interview of the Paris Review's Art of Fiction series to be held with a young writer. The first appeared in the fourth issue of this review—an interview with William Styron, author of the remarkable first novel Lie Down in Darkness. *From time to time, other interviews will appear with young authors on the problems of their craft.)*

Françoise Sagan now lives in a small and modern ground floor apartment of her own on the rue de Grenelle where she is busily writing a film script and some song lyrics as well as a new novel. But when she was interviewed early last spring just before the publication of *Un Certain Sourire*, she lived across the city in her parents' apartment on the Boulevard Malesherbes in a neighborhood which is a stronghold of

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the well-to-do French bourgoisie. She met the interviewers in the comfortably furnished living room, seated them in large chairs drawn up to a marble fireplace, and offered them scotch from a pint bottle which was unquestionably, somehow, her own contribution to the larder. Her manner is shy, but casual and friendly, and her gamine face crinkles easily into an attractive, rather secret smile. She wore a simple black sweater and grey skirt; if she is a vain girl the only indication of it was her high-heeled shoes which were of elegantly worked light grey leather. She speaks in a high-pitched but quiet voice and she clearly does not enjoy being interviewed or asked to articulate in a formal way what are, to her, natural assumptions about her writing. She is sincere and helpful, but questions which are pompous or elaborate, or about personal life, or which might be interpreted as challenging her work, are liable to elicit only a simple "*oui*" or "*non*", or "*je ne sais pas—je ne sais pas du tout*"—and then an amused, disconcerting smile.

* * *

INTERVIEWERS

How did you come to start *Bonjour Tristesse* when you were 18? Did you expect it would be published?

SAGAN

I simply started it. I had a strong desire to write and some free time. I said to myself: this is the sort of enterprise very very little girls of my age devote themselves to; I'll never be able to finish it. I wasn't thinking about "literature" and literary problems, but about myself and whether I had the necessary will power.

INTERVIEWERS

Did you let it drop and then take it up again?

SAGAN

No, I wanted passionately to finish it—I've never wanted anything so much. While I was writing I thought there might be a chance of it being published. Finally when it was done, I

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thought it was hopeless. I was suprised by the book and by myself.

INTERVIEWERS

Had you wanted to write for a long time before?

SAGAN

Yes. I had read a lot of stories. It seemed to me impossible not to want to write one. Instead of leaving for Chili with a band of gangsters, one stays in Paris and writes a novel. That seems to me the great adventure.

INTERVIEWERS

How quickly did it go? Had you thought out the story in advance?

SAGAN

For *Bonjour Tristesse* all I started with was the idea of a character, the girl, but nothing really came of it until my pen was in hand. I have to start to write to have ideas. I wrote *Bonjour Tristesse* in two or three months working two or three hours a day. *Un Certain Sourire* was different. I made a number of little notes and then thought about the book for two years. When I started in writing, again two hours a day, it went very fast. When you make a decision to write according to a set schedule and really stick to it, you find yourself writing very fast. At least I do.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you spend much time revising the style.

SAGAN

Very little.

INTERVIEWERS

Then the work on the two novels didn't take more than 5 or 6 months in all?

SAGAN

Yes, (*smiling*) its a good way to make a living.

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INTERVIEWERS

You say the important thing at the start is a character...

SAGAN

A character, or a few characters, and perhaps an idea for a few of the scenes up to the middle of the book, but it all changes in the writing. For me writing is a question of finding a certain rhythm. I compare it to the rhythms of jazz. Much of the time life is a sort of rhythmic progression of three characters. If one tells oneself that life is like that, one feels it less arbitrary.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you draw on the people you know for your characters?

SAGAN

I've tried very hard and I've never found any resemblance between the people I know and the people in my novels. I don't search for exactitude in portraying people. I try to give to imaginary people a kind of veracity. It would bore me to death to put into my novels the people I know. It seems to me that there are two kinds of trickery: the "fronts" people assume before one another's eyes and the "front" a writer puts on the face of reality.

INTERVIEWERS

Then you think it is a form of cheating to take directly from reality?

SAGAN

Certainly: Art must take reality by suprise. It takes those moments which are for us merely a moment, plus a moment, plus another moment, and arbitrarily transforms them into a special series of moments held together by a major emotion. Art should not, it seems to me, pose the "real" as a preoccupation. Nothing is more unreal than certain so-called "realist" novels—they're nightmares. It is possible to achieve in a novel a certain sensory truth—the true feeling of a character —that is all.

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Of course the illusion of art is to make one believe that great literature is very close to life but exactly the opposite is true. Life is amorphous, literature is formal.

INTERVIEWERS

There are certain activities in life with highly developed forms, for instance horse racing. Are the jockeys less real because of that?

SAGAN

People possessed by strong passions for their activities, as jockeys may seem to be, don't give me the impression of being very real. They often seem like characters in novels, but *without* novels, like *The Flying Dutchman*.

INTERVIEWERS

Do your characters stay in your mind after the book is finished? What kind of judgments do you make about them?

SAGAN

When the book is finished I immediately lose interest in the characters. And I *never* make moral judgments. All I would say is that a person was droll, or gay, or above all, a bore. Making judgments for or against my characters bores me enormously, it doesn't interest me at all. The only morality for a novelist is the morality of his *esthetique*. I write the books, they come to an end, and that's all that concerns me.

INTERVIEWERS

When you finished *Bonjour Tristesse* did it undergo much revising by an editor?

SAGAN

A number of general suggestions were made about the first book. For example, there were several versions of the ending and in one of them Anne didn't die. Finally it was decided that the book would be stronger in the version in which she did.

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INTERVIEWERS

Did you learn anything from the published criticism of the book.

SAGAN

When the articles were agreeable I read them through. I never learned anything at all from them but I was astonished by their imagination and fecundity. They saw intentions I never had.

INTERVIEWERS

How do you feel now about *Bonjour Tristesse*.

SAGAN

I like *Un Certain Sourire* better, because it was more difficult. But I find *Bonjour Tristesse* amusing because it recalls certain stage of my life. And I wouldn't change a word... What's done is done.

INTERVIEWERS

Why do you say *Un Certain Sourire* is a more difficult book?

SAGAN

I didn't hold the same trump cards in writing the second book: no seaside summer vacation atmosphere, no intrigue naively mounting to a climax, none of the gay cynicism of Cecile. And then it was difficult simply because it was the second book.

INTERVIEWERS

Did you find it difficult to switch from the first person of *Bonjour Tristesse* to the third person narrative of *Un Certain Sourire*.

SAGAN

Yes, it is harder, more limiting and disciplining. But I wouldn't make as much of that difficulty as some writers apparently do.

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INTERVIEWERS

What French writers do you admire and feel important to you?

SAGAN

Oh I don't know. Certainly Stendhal and Proust. I love their mastery of the narrative, and in some ways I find myself in definite need of them. For example after Proust there are certain things that simply cannot be done again. He marks off for you the boundaries of your talent. He shows you the possibilities that lie in the treatment of character.

INTERVIEWERS

What strikes you particularly about Proust's characters?

SAGAN

Perhaps the things that one does not know about them as much as the things one knows. For me, that is literature in the very best sense: after all the long and slow analyses one is far from knowing all the thoughts and facts and sides of Swann for example—and that is as it should be. One has no desire at all to ask "who was Swann?" To know who was Proust is quite enough. I don't know if that's clear: I mean to say that Swann belongs completely to Proust and it is impossible to imagine a Balzacian Swann while one might well imagine a Proustian Marsay.

INTERVIEWERS

Is it possible that novels get written because the novelist imagines himself in the role of a novelist writing a novel?

SAGAN

No, one assumes the role of hero and then seeks out "the novelist" who can write his story.

INTERVIEWERS

And one always find the same novelist?

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SAGAN

Essentially yes. Very broadly, I think one writes and rewrites the same book. I lead a character from book to book, I continue along with the same ideas. Only the angle of vision, the method, the lighting, change. Speaking very very roughly it seems to me there are two kinds of novels—there is that much choice. There are those which simply tell a story and sacrifice a great deal to the telling—like the books of Benjamin Constant which *Bonjour Tristesse* and *Un Certain Sourire* resemble in construction. And then there are those books which attempt to discuss and probe the characters and events in the book—*un roman ou l'on discute*. The pitfalls of both are obvious: in the simple narrative it often seems that the important questions are passed over. In the longer classical novel the digressions can impair the effectiveness.

INTERVIEWERS

Would you like to write '*un roman ou l'on discute*'.

SAGAN

Yes I would like to write—in fact I'm now planning—a novel with a larger cast of characters—there will be three heroines—and with characters more diffuse and elastic than Dominique and Cecile and the others in the first two books. The novel I would like to write is one in which the hero would be freed from the demands of the plot, freed from the novel itself and from the author.

INTERVIEWERS

To what extent do you recognize your limits and maintain a check on your ambitions?

SAGAN

Well, that is a pretty disagreeable question, isn't it? I recognize limitations in the sense that I've read Tolstoy and

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Dostoyevesky and Shakespeare. That's the best answer, I think. Aside from that I don't think of limiting myself.

INTERVIEWERS

You've very quickly made a lot of money. Has it changed your life? Do you make a distinction between writing novels for money and writing seriously as some American and French writers do?

SAGAN

Of course the success of the books has changed my life somewhat because I have a lot of money to spend if I wish, but as far as my position in life is concerned, it hasn't changed much. Now I have a car but I've always eaten steaks. You know, to have a lot of money in one's pocket is nice but that's all. The prospect of making more or less money would never affect the way I write—I write the books and if money appears afterward, *tant mieux.*

Sagan interrupted the interviewers to say that she had to leave to work on a radio program. She apologized and got up to go. It was difficult to believe, once she had stopped talking, that the slight, engaging girl had, with a single book, reached more readers than most novelists do in a lifetime. Rather, one would have thought her a school girl rushing off to the Sorbonne as she called down the apartment hall to her mother: "Au revoir, maman. Je sors travailler mais je rentre de bonne heure."

—BLAIR FULLER
ROBERT B. SILVERS

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THE WINTER

THE winter had set in earlier than usual. It was the beginning of November and already wet snow was scudding about, driven along by a storm. Sometimes it seemed as though the wind, rising after a breathing space, would smash the row of low houses and scatter their remains.

Henry stood in the narrow bay window of the front room and stared into the flying snow.

"I know the soft wood's growing," he said to himself. "But it has to be put where it's safe. I'll have to find a safe place and plant it there if the storms go on. Before it's too late."

After each gust of wind, a tremendous howling could be heard as the storm threw itself upon the wood opposite the house. A number of branches had already been torn off from the most exposed of the trees.

The house was on the Eastern outskirts of the town. Its window looked out on what was an almost open stretch of country where the storm could sweep along without any obstacle in its way. Directly opposite the house, however, the view was broken by a wood which had been a reserve belonging to a mill-owner, and once it was supposed to have contained deer. When planted, it had been half an hour's distance from town, but now, suburbs had reached it and had begun to surround it. Wide strips of land were being prepared for building and farms had disappeared on both sides of it. The wood itself would soon disappear as well. This had been decided years before and it had not been cared for since. It was enclosed by a high fence made of iron bars with barbed wire at the top, but the foundations of the fence had

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decayed, so that it leaned outward and was broken in places.

When Henry was a boy, it had been an adventure to steal into the wood, for then there had nearly always been foresters on their rounds. Now, however, it was no longer guarded. Henry sometimes walked there under the motionless, dead branches spanned by webs, along paths almost impossible to see because of the load of soaked dead leaves which were never removed. What had previously been small ponds had turned into expanses of stagnant water which were shallow and filthy because the wooden borders had mouldered away and the earth of the embankments had fallen in. He had encountered frightened birds and squirrels in it, but had never seen a deer.

Behind him, in the living room, his mother was sitting at the table, listening to the storm. Now and then she looked with concern at some plants on a flower stand in the front room and wondered if they were too near the window, even though rugs had been put both on the sill and against the lower part of the frame.

"Neighbor Tonia said she'd move our gladiolus plant into the middle of the garden," she said. "Because it couldn't be seen. It was growing at the outer end, the farthest end of the garden. But she didn't do it right, and now it's dead. A gladiolus is such a delicate flower." She shook her head. "It's such a pity about that nice plant. It's such a pity." Neighbor Tonia had moved many years ago to another town.

Henry walked into the sitting room and sat down at the end of the divan where he began to stare at a newspaper. It was difficult to read because the sky was very dark.

His father stood looking outside into the back garden where the snow was melting on the flower beds. He put his ear against the old, brown cardboard loudspeaker and caught the half-past-twelve change of programme. The dance music stopped, and the half hour programme for farmers began. The old man took a running jump so that he managed to climb up on the divan. From there he could reach high enough to set the clock and to pull down a chain with a little weight in the shape of a fir cone. It was a small clock of

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matchwood with a tinplate pendulum, and its celluloid minute hand was patched up where it had once been broken. Breathing hard, the old man got down from the divan. He said that the clock was slow because it had dried out, and that he was going to oil it with lamp oil.

"Lamp oil's no good for that!" Henry blurted out. "Lamp oil's only good for cleaning something, or if you want to get rust off something!" He brought his face near to the old man's head. "You mustn't ever oil any wheels with lamp oil. You'd only wreck everything! Lamp oil has always got water in it. There are thousands and thousands of water particles in it!" He was sure he had learned something like that during the half year he had been at a technical school.

Henry was thirty-two. He had finished elementary school at fifteen, after which he had had a series of errand-boy jobs, but in each case he had been dismissed. After this, his parents had decided that he should continue his schooling. As a result they had sent him to a carpenters' school, but halfway through the first year, they had been advised to take him back home.

"Yeah, yeah," said the old man. He was looking out over the back garden again. Behind him, the old woman began to cover the table with two newspapers. She laid out four iron plates. Then she cut some bread and placed some slices beside each of the plates, now and then wiping her watering eyes with the back of her hand. She was not able to do many other tasks except to peel potatoes and clean vegetables. The rest of the housework was done by the old man.

Henry's father went into the kitchen to stir the food which was on the stove, in order to keep it from sticking to the pan. Some thin lines of vapor from the cooking came floating through the kitchen door into the room.

Several minutes later they saw Albert cross the backyard. He entered the kitchen where he washed his hands and shook pieces of dried plaster out of his hair. He was two years older than Henry, but Henry could still remember how pale and fat Albert had been when he was a little boy and how when he suffered from attacks of asthma, he used to stand against

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the wall of the house and cry softly while the others kept on playing. Because of his frailty, he had not been sent into the mill as had the rest of Henry's brothers and sisters, but had been apprenticed to a plasterer. Now he was a foreman, and because his job was in the neighborhood he took his midday meal at home.

Albert came into the room. His father followed close behind him and put the pan down on the table. The old woman distributed the food onto the plates and they began to eat in silence.

Albert took up his stack of bread and put it on the edge of his plate. He looked at the newspapers on the table with a wry face. Henry hated him because of his cleanliness and preciseness. He also hated him because he went each month by bus to see Femia, their sister, and also because he went on conducted tours, and sometimes even went to the opera. Afterwards, he would fill the house with his hoarse voice, trying to sing the arias. Henry glanced at Albert's red, fat face. "He thinks he's very clean," he thought.

"You seem to think that newspapers are dirty," he said to Albert. "But newspapers aren't any dirtier than any other kind of paper. Paper consists of vegetable fibres." The left corner of his mouth twisted downward and his face trembled.

"It's plain filthy and unsanitary," Albert said. "Ink is downright poison. I eat everything, but not if it's dirty."

"Printing ink is made of soot," Henry answered. "Soot specially selected for it. And linseed oil. Soot's not poison, and not even harmful. It's only ground-up carbon, and carbon's used in medicine." He could feel himself beginning to sweat. "Everybody knows animals eat it. When deer find ashes of a fire, they eat all the charcoal in it they can find. Everybody knows that charcoal's got carbon in it."

"Why don't you eat soot then?" Albert asked. "With salt and pepper on it." He turned to the old woman. "Has the man come to clean the chimneys yet? When he comes, Henry must have his plate of soot. Don't forget."

"I didn't say you could eat it like food," Henry said. His mouth became thick with saliva.

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"Ma, tomorrow at dinner time, don't forget!" Albert told her. "Tomorrow at dinner time Henry must have a nice plate of soot." He burst into a laugh, and a piece of food fell out of his mouth. Henry noticed that it was almost the same color as Albert's hair. It made no sense to argue.

"Tomorrow at lunch, a plate of soot for our hardworking Henry!" Albert sang in a sort of bass recitative.

"You shouldn't always quarrel," the old woman said with concern. Her head shook on its thin stem, and her eyes turned damp. "Always quarrelling, always quarrelling," she said with a sigh.

"I don't quarrel," Henry said.

"Ma doesn't want you to," she continued, wiping her eyes. "Quarrelling is very bad for Henry."

The old man looked at her and bent forward. "Eh?" he asked.

"The boys are quarrelling again!" she screamed into his ear. "All that damned quarrelling again."

"Yeah, yeah," he mumbled.

They finished the meal in silence. Albert pushed his chair back and lit a cigarette.

"I'll ask Rik about the address of that farmer," Henry said. He got up and went upstairs to a small front room which had been partitioned off with fibre board from the rest of the garret. The only furniture in the room was a bed and a wardrobe. It was cold.

He left the room, and walked into the garret itself. Beneath the skylight was a lathe which stood amidst piles of shavings and sawdust. Nearby, in a butter box were some faded account sheets with his name printed on them. On top of these lay an oval rubber stamp that was hardened and dry. The lettering on the stamp read *H. Aldering: Wood Turner.*

After his failure at the technical school, Henry had for a short time been an apprentice to a wood turner. However, the wood turner had gone bankrupt, and Henry had then stayed at home doing odd carpentry jobs with the tools he had stolen during his apprenticeship. Saving the small amounts he earned, he bought an old electric motor and a

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lathe in order to turn chair legs, but he had never been able to sell his work. As a result he had greased the equipment, wrapped it up in rags, and for the last twelve years it had stood there untouched. Underneath it, the mounds of sawdust had turned dark from a fine layer of coal dust. "It's not natural," he said to himself. "If a machine makes something, then it isn't a natural thing any more."

He heard Albert pass through the kitchen and scullery, close the back door and then bang the gate shut. Through the window, he saw him come out of the alleyway next to the house and turn to the left. Henry reached out for a piece of coal and stepped back to the window, but Albert was out of sight.

Outside the wind was dying down and thick snow was falling. It stuck to the window panes, melted and trickled down. "The house is crying again," he thought. On the pavement, below, the snow melted almost immediately, but on the trees in the wood it stayed longer. "The deer will help me," he said to himself. "And we'll put a stop to all those people shadowing me. I've got to find the lantern."

He went downstairs and sat on the divan. From there he could still look through the front window and watch the falling snow. His mother was doing her utmost to separate two parts of a cloth-covered metal button, in order to replace the worn cloth.

"I think I'll put on ordinary ones," she said. "These buttons don't seem to come open." She snipped off all the remaining buttons from an old woollen coat she held and began to search through a little box. "Our Albert's going to buy a motorcycle," she said. She scratched through the box like a hen, peering into it with her face directly above it. Henry's father was in the kitchen, washing the dishes they had used.

Outside the gate opened with a rattle and a collie entered the backyard, rushed in the direction of the garden and then returned to the yard again, where it began jumping up against the scullery door. A woman in a brown coat crossed the backyard and went into the scullery.

"Why, Fanny's here!" the old woman called out, clapping

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her hands. They could hear the noise of the dog barking and jumping in the kitchen, mingled with the mumbled curses of the old man.

Fanny came into the room. She kissed Henry's mother, complained about the weather, and sat down on the divan at a distance from Henry. Then she told the dog to be quiet. The dog shook itself as though in a frenzy and some of the melting snow landed on the old woman. "Down, Nero!" she cried out, drawing back with a nervous titter.

"Couldn't you leave your dog at home in this weather?" Henry asked.

"But the dog goes everywhere with her," the old woman said in tones that were almost wailing. "Yes, Nero loves Fanny very much, doesn't he? Yes! Wants to go everywhere with her, doesn't he?" The dog tried to jump up against her.

"Down, Oscar!" Fanny called and when it returned to her she held the dog by its collar. "His nails should be trimmed," she said, patting it on its back.

Fanny was a short, stout woman with a pink, kind face that had retained a childish expression even though it had begun to wrinkle. The impression of softness was marred, however, by her front teeth, which were too large and irregular, and in order to keep from lisping she had to twist her mouth. Sixteen years before, when she had married Rik, who was six years older than his brother Henry, she had been considered pretty in spite of her teeth. They had been married when she was four months pregnant, but nevertheless she had worn a white gown and white satin shoes, and this had provided much gossip for the neighbors. Proceeding to set up their household with old furniture given to them by relatives and friends, they had begun living almost at once on unemployment assistance. In the third year of their marriage, however, Rik took a job as a ship's baker. But soon after, his stomach began to trouble him, and because he was forced more and more often to take sick leaves he finally lost his job. They had no children. The pregnancy had ended in miscarriage.

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"I think that we're going to have a white Christmas," the old woman said, nodding and looking outside.

"But that's still two months off," said Fanny. "You can't tell much about that now."

"Is it still such a long time?" the old woman asked. "I thought Christmas was next week." She smiled and rubbed her hands. "At Christmas time, all of us will be here, and we'll have the tree in the front room in the blue pot, with lots of little lights, and we'll sing, and our Albert'll play the mandolin. All the children will be there. Won't it be nice!"

"How can you ever put a tree in that small pot?" Henry asked. "A tree would never fit in a pot that size. And I suppose you want me to go into the woods and chop a tree down. But I won't. You shouldn't take trees out of the woods. Except if you want to grow them."

The old man hurried into the room with a coffeepot too hot for his hands. He blew on them, and then began to fill the cups.

"How's Rik?" he asked, shouting.

"So-so. He's up again! He's out of bed again!" Fanny shouted back, with a reassuring gesture of her hand. "He's gone away on the train. He had to go and have a medical examination!" The old man looked at her and sat down, mumbling.

"He had to go and get examined," Fanny said, this time to Henry's mother. "They want to do us out of all our assistance money."

"Poor Rik," the old woman said. "Never feels well."

"He's only just out of bed," Fanny went on. "And if he goes outside and there's a cold wind, it hits his stomach, and that's something he can't stand. Then all those pains come back again right away." She laid both hands on her abdomen, pressed them against her, and in doing so let the dog loose. It climbed up on the divan, and standing under the clock, it wagged its tail against the chains and weight, so that the ends of the chains became entangled and the pendulum stopped. Cursing, the old man stumbled onto the divan himself, kicked away the dog and rearranged the clock.

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Bending forward with a glance at Henry, Fanny began to chuckle, but Henry seemed not to notice.

"What awful weather," the old woman said. "What a gloomy day."

Henry's father got down from the divan and looked out into the garden, his hands in his pockets. The dog, frightened, stood at the kitchen door, waiting for a chance to leave the room.

"I'm going to go meet the half past two train," Fanny said. When no one replied she continued, "He's feeling a lot better now, but he must be careful what he eats. He can't keep much down. And those fits of crying go on. As always."

"Poor Rik," the old woman repeated. "Fanny, do take care of him, and maybe at Christmas he'll be all right again."

"It's only a question of natural food," Henry said. "If people ate natural food they wouldn't be ill."

"He eats only what the doctor says, and nothing else," Fanny said. "That's the only thing we can do. And as for the rest, we can only wait and see if it goes better this time."

"He won't ever get better with the food he eats," Henry went on. "Natural food's the only thing that can help him."

The radio still played very softly, and now and then Henry's father pressed his ear against the loudspeaker. Some music was on, but all that could be heard was a vague scratching, like a concert given by insects on miniature instruments.

"Do you think you know more than the doctor?" Fanny asked.

"Rik's been dragged about for years from one doctor to another," Henry said. "And what do they do? He only gets worse." He tried to imitate a doctor, and squeaked, "You must be careful. From now on you can only eat this and this, and sometimes a little of that. But not too much! Remember that! Don't forget! And now I'll give you some pills."

"They've tried everything," Fanny said. "And when nothing worked, they operated. They've done everything they could."

"Operated!" Henry cried out. "Always sawing and cutting up! The butcher on the corner could do just as well. You just cut away what you don't like. That's easy enough!"

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"Rik'll be all right again soon," the old woman said, wiping her eyes. "But he should eat a lot. Then he'll get strong again. Weak, thin people should eat as much as they can to get strong."

"With natural food he would have been all right years ago," Henry said. He was about to continue, but Fanny interrupted him.

"What's this all about, this natural food of yours?" she asked sharply. "I'd like to know."

"You know just as well as I do," Henry answered. "And every doctor knows it, too. But they're too stupid to use it. Everything that's cooked is harmful. One should eat everything right away the way it comes out of nature. If it's dirty, you wash it off, with cold water, and then you eat it. Do you think that deer cook their food? You mustn't chop it up, either. You must eat everything whole: fish, carrots, eggs, meat, potatoes, vegetables, lettuce. Everything."

"But how's that possible?" Fanny asked. "If he even eats just one bite of something raw, he cries out with pain. You're crazy."

"It'll probably hurt a bit at first," Henry went on. "Because his body won't be used to it right away. But he should stick to it. But, well, if he likes being ill and never doing a stroke of work, he can do as he likes."

"Our Rik isn't lazy," the old woman said. "He's always so hard at work."

"Why don't you eat that natural food of yours yourself?" Fanny asked. "Why don't you eat raw potatoes and raw meat?"

"I don't have anything to do with the cooking here," Henry said. "I don't meddle with it."

"It wouldn't be so bad for you if you did," Fanny said. "Then at least you'd have something to do."

The old man suddenly noticed that the radio programme had changed, and he turned it up so that it was very loud. *The late aster is a typical autumn flower!* a voice bellowed. *It continues to blossom outside as late as mid-November! But however well it keeps in the garden, when cut and brought inside it will*

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wither almost at once! A more suitable flower, that is to say if not the most suitable...

The old woman began to shout with all her might, protesting against its loudness. Finally Henry's father understood and he turned back the knob. The dog meanwhile had become restless and was scratching at the door.

"Soft wood should not be put in a vase," Henry said. "It must remain in the ground."

"I've seen nice vases in show windows," Fanny said, making a vague gesture in the direction of town. They've got nice things there. But they aren't cheap."

"I'd like to have a nice little vase," the old woman said. "A little vase, for tiny flowers. Then we could put it near the window, and we could look at it all the time."

"They've got very nice things made of wood there, too," Fanny went on. "Polished wood. All of them are round. There's a lovely round cigarette box of light brown wood. I'd like to give it to Rik, for his birthday, if he can ever smoke again. It costs three fifty, but it's such a nice box." She looked at the clock. "I've got to go to the station," she said. Henry's father once again filled the cups.

"Those round wooden things are turned on a lathe, aren't they?" Fanny asked, suddenly turning to Henry. "You can turn wood, can't you? Why don't you make things like that? If they're at all nice, you can earn a lot of money with them."

"No," Henry said. "No." He closed his eyes in order to keep composed. "If you want to buy something made of wood then buy it in a shop. And if you haven't got enough money, then don't buy it." He got up, trembling, but he was able to control his voice. "I don't mind if they try to follow and shadow me," he continued, but then suddenly he began to shout. "I know what you're after!" he screamed, pointing his forefinger at her face. "You all want to put me up upstairs and make me turn wood there without paying me! With my food pushed in through the door, and with what comes out thrown out the window! You've thought it out very well, this little plan of yours! But it won't do!"

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"Easy! Easy!" Fanny said. "I won't eat you! I'm not touching you."

"Where man goes, nature disappears," Henry mumbled. "It's not natural." He slowly left the room. He went through the kitchen and into the scullery. The dog was about to follow him, but Fanny called it back. Behind him he could hear her indignant voice. He stood at the door between the kitchen and the scullery for a moment and listened. "But I didn't mean that he should make me a box, or do anything for me at all!" he heard her remonstrating.

"It's only because he always quarrels," the old woman said. "It's such a pity. He shouldn't always quarrel. It's not good for him."

Henry shut the door. He picked up an old dark-lantern which stood behind some empty cans on the floor. It was covered with spider webs, and was very rusty. The shutter was stuck and when he finally succeeded in pulling it up it gave off a piercing screech. He rubbed away the dirt with a newspaper and saw that inside the lantern there was still a half-used candle.

Fanny passed hurriedly through the scullery, followed by the dog. She did not say good-bye. The dog stopped for a moment to sneeze.

"You won't catch me," Henry murmured, still bent over the lantern. "Don't think I haven't found you out. I know everything about all those plans of yours. It's been very well thought out, but it won't do."

There was no answer, and when he turned around there was no one there. He ran outside and caught up with Fanny as she was about to open the gate.

"Wait! Wait!" he called. "I want to ask you something."

She stopped, holding her hand on the latch. A thick swirl of snow fell upon them. The dog blinked its eyes in order to remove the snowflakes which had settled on its lids.

"I want to know the address of that farmer," he said. "Where you and Rik were living. You know where I mean, don't you?"

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"What do you want it for?" she asked. She kept her hand on the latch.

"Well, don't you know that it's dangerous everywhere?" Henry asked.

"I don't see why I should give it to you," she said. "Why do you want to go there? I don't want anybody to go and trouble those people. They've done a lot for us."

"They're drawing up lists," he said. "And they've put out sentries. At night it isn't so bad. But in the daytime they can easily see who you are and where you're going. They've been following me all this last week. And they've written down everything. Also about the deer." He smiled. "You know I'm not frightened really, but I don't like it." Fanny looked at him with wide open eyes, and she drew in short breaths.

"Has it got any trees, this farm?" Henry asked. "Is there a wood?"

"Oh yes," she said nervously. "There're lots of woods everywhere. And trees, too. Oh yes."

"So trees can grow there," Henry said pensively, drawing nearer to her. "Well, where is it?"

"I...I don't know, I've forgotten," she stammered. "You'd better ask Rik. Rik knows."

"If you can't remember where it is, how do you know then about the woods and the trees?" he asked. His mouth began to fill with saliva. Fanny lifted the latch and opened the gate. Henry slowly raised his arm.

"Lying, that's all you can do," he said. "And creep and hide in the bushes with everybody."

Fanny pushed the gate open and, followed by the dog, hurried away. Henry jumped forward and struck at her, but missed. She herself had not noticed, but the dog whirled around and tried to attack. Henry stepped back in time, however, and slammed the gate shut.

Everything was quiet again. His shoulders and head were covered with snow. He looked out over the garden. "The poor birds," he said to himself. "They're going to die. But I'll bury them. I'll give them a decent funeral."

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He went inside. His mother was sitting in an easy chair near the stove.

"Poor children," she said. "They're always so sweet, and they play together so nice." She gave a soft, moaning sigh. The old man was in the front room, sweeping the floor.

"Rik had to go and be examined again," she said. "They want to take his money from him. But Doctor Langelaan's against it. Doctor Langelaan, he's a real doctor. He's on our side."

The old man passed through, on his way to the kitchen carrying the dustpan and the brush.

"He's gone there by train," she said. She tried to remember more details, but she could not. "Trains cost a lot," she said. "Cost a lot of money. And they haven't got it. They haven't got the money. Poor children." She drew her shoulders together to show her concern, but then her face suddenly brightened. "He can go there with our Albert, on the motorcycle!" she said. Then she sank into a doze.

It grew darker and darker inside the house. It had stopped snowing, and a brown haze seemed to be rising up out of the earth. Shadows began to spread over the gardens and small houses.

"I'm going to buy some tobacco," the old man said, putting on his coat. "It's not snowing any more. On the way back I'll drop in to see how our blind comrade is." This was a neighbor, Mr. Captain, who lived several houses away. The two had worked together for many years in the mill, until Mr. Captain had received a head injury from a shaft of one of the looms. After this his wife had to read his newspapers and mail out loud to him, but he went on reading books himself, in braille, about the working class movement, which were sent to him by friends.

Henry went into the scullery to fetch the dark-lantern and came back into the room. The old woman was asleep. Her mouth had fallen open, showing the wet, brown flesh inside her lips.

Henry lit the candle in the lantern and then, holding it up, stared fixedly into the flame. He had not heard the slow,

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shuffling footsteps in the kitchen. There was a knock at the door.

"Hello folks," Julius said, coming in. He looked around, trying to accustom his eyes to the vague light in the room. "Mother sleeping?" he asked, walking carefully to the other easy chair which stood between the window and divan. "Don't wake her up!" he said softly, with many gestures. "I don't need to sit near the stove." He opened his coat laboriously, and began shifting himself about in the chair. Something snapped and creaked. When he had found a satisfactory position he smiled. He wore a corset of yellow leather reinforced by metal ribs, which enclosed the whole of his hips and waist. He was forty-three, but he was very thin and looked old. He spoke slowly in a mild, agreeable voice.

"How are things here?" he asked. The corset looked like a children's bathtub into which he had stepped accidentally, sunk through the bottom up to his hips, and which he could not now remove. Henry blew the candle out.

"What's that lantern for?" Julius asked.

"I've just been trying it out," Henry answered.

The old woman woke up, making little grunting noises. Julius got up from the chair so that his figure was clearly outlined against the window. A faint smell of warm leather had spread about through the room.

"Here's a surprise!" the old woman called out. "What about some coffee! Father! Make some coffee for our Julius!" Julius sat down again.

"Father's over at the Captains," Henry said.

"Is Albert in?" Julius asked.

"Our Albert's working," the old woman answered. "He's always working."

"On Saturday afternoon?" Julius asked. "Is he still over there at work?" Then, reflecting, he said half to himself, "Yes, of course, they want to get those houses ready before it starts freezing."

"It's so nice that you've come," she continued. "I'll tell Albert you came to see him. It's so nice."

"I'd like to get *State and Revolution* back from him, if

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he's finished reading it," Julius said. "But maybe he's not finished it yet."

"Our Albert works so hard! So hard!" she replied, shaking her head. "Always working. He hasn't got any time even to read. Always at work, our poor Albert. Always outside in the cold and the wind. Fanny was here."

"And Rik, too?" Julius asked. "Was he here?"

"He had to go have an examination," she said. "And trains cost such a lot!"

"He's hardly out of bed and they're dragging him around to be examined again," Julius said, shaking his head. His voice was not indignant, but sounded sad.

"Do you think they'll have good doctors there?" she asked. "Oh, they're sure to do everything for our Rik. And doctor Langelaan says he'll try and do everything for Rik, too."

"Doctor Langelaan says Rik can't work," Julius said, trying to assume an upright position, although it appeared to cause him pain. "He can't do full time or even part time work. He says that Rik shouldn't work because his stomach is really bad. He's written it down on paper, too. But even if his stomach was all right he still couldn't work because his kidneys are bad, too. His stomach was already in bad shape before he was taken to the camp, and it got a lot worse there. The only reason he's got that bad kidney is from that kick. I was there, and I saw it. He almost died of pain, and he pissed blood. But they pay no attention when he tells them all that."

"Doctor Langelaan's an awful good doctor," the old woman said.

"And Doctor Jansink claims that Rik's stomach has nothing to do with the camp, and that his kidneys are all right because he is able to eat salty food," Julius continued.

"Well, we're not going to put up with lies like that!" she said with vehemence.

"The only thing you can do is to keep your head, and don't make a fuss," Julius said. "If they think you're a nuisance, you're lost. When they write you a letter, you've got to write another back to them. And if you can't write a good one, you've got to go to somebody who knows how to do

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it. Somebody who knows about things like that. Take me, for instance. They think they've found out so many things about my back! They say it's normal that a man of my age has a shifted and cracked spine. They say that it's bone degeneration, and they always ask me if I used to drink a lot, and so forth. But they never even consider what went on in the camp, oh no!"

"When they lived with that farmer, Rik didn't have anything wrong with his stomach," Henry said. "By the way, where was that farm?"

"Yes, that's true," Julius said. "He didn't have any pain there at all. All the time he was there he was free of pain."

"Where was it? Where's that farm?" Henry asked.

"I think it was somewhere in Bursen," Julius answered. A surprised and worried look came over his face.

"Where's our Katie?" the old woman asked.

"She had to do some housework," Julius answered. "She's at home." He never brought his wife with him on family visits. She could neither read nor write and because of this his family looked down on her.

"It's always good to have a place where you can hide if necessary," Henry said. "They never lay off. They spy on everybody all the time."

"You've got to get some of those queer ideas out of your head," Julius said.

Henry lit the candle in the lantern. The old woman began to doze off again.

"What do you need that for?" Julius asked. "Why are you lighting that?"

"The soft wood's already grown a lot," Henry answered. "But I can't leave it outside in this weather any longer."

"The what?" Julius asked.

"I said the soft wood!" Henry suddenly shouted. His mother jumped at the sound of his voice, but she again closed her eyes.

"Soft wood," Julius said, reflecting. He cast a short, cautious glance at his brother.

'Would you maintain that something made out of wood

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that's been sawed or turned on a lathe is still natural?" Henry asked in a hard, interrogating tone.

Julius cast his eyes downward.

"All I've got to do is grow it," Henry said. "That's all. In a safe place. Do you mean to say that I can't grow wood?"

"Oh, I didn't mean that," Julius said in a very kind voice. "But what I do know—of course I don't know much about it—is that growing trees is a trade in itself. It needs experience. And you've got to have lots of land for it. And money."

"Only a small plot of ground that's guarded day and night," Henry said. "Because my soft wood is pretty expensive. Everybody wants to have it."

There was silence. Then Henry said, speaking quickly, "If necessary, I'll wait a couple of hours. But if the storm goes on like this, I'll have to bring it inside." Suddenly shifting into an excited, indignant tone, he added, "Albert's got to stop helping them and giving them information. He won't gain anything by telling them where they can find me and where they should follow me. I tell you, he's got to stop it."

Julius said nothing. Henry got his coat from the hall, picked up the lantern, and left.

Outside, it was almost dark and there was a strong wind. The snow had melted on the streets, but at the edge of the wood some of it still remained.

Henry followed along the fence to the right until he came to what had long ago been a driveway into the wood. He stopped in front of a double gate. The lock was covered with layers of rust. He had only to press to make the gate give way, and to walk through into the wood.

As soon as the wood had closed in on him, he opened the slide of the lantern. All around him there were the sounds of wind and of melting snow which dripped from bough to bough. He had to lift his feet high to keep from getting entangled in dead branches.

After a while, the trees opened up along what had once been a path, because here the undergrowth under his feet was not as thick as it had been. His feet made sopping sounds as he walked. Frequently he had to stop to remove the

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pieces of snow or lichen which fell on him from the trees.

The path began to widen and at last Henry entered on an open space overgrown with grass and tall nettles. In the middle of it stood an old wooden hut. The boarding on its sides had rotted away, so that grass and other small plants grew in the cracks. The wind had torn great sheaves of thatch out of the roof, and had scattered them about. The lower half of the door was hidden by grass and weeds. He did not turn the handle but simply pushed the door inward, because the wood holding the lock was completely decayed.

The ground surface of the hut had no boards, but only moist sand. On this lay pieces of a broken wheelbarrow and a rusted spade. Several of the rafters had broken in two and had fallen down so that they stood on end. Some rain had fallen through the roof and many puddles had formed in the sand. All the light there was came in through one tiny skylight.

Well away from the door, standing upright in the sand, were two rows of twigs which had the appearance of having been planted there because each one had a small wet hole at its base. None of the twigs measured more than a foot from the ground. Between the two rows stood a white enamel pail. Henry went over, lifted the pail, and taking a piece of bread out, examined it carefully. Then he nodded. "Yes, the deer has eaten from it," he said. He put the pail down again. Then he studied the rows of small branches. One of them stood at an angle. "So Albert's been here," he thought. "I got here just in time."

He pulled the twigs out of the sand, counted them up to sixteen, and arranged them into a bundle. With great care he put them under his coat. Then he picked up the lantern and pail, and left.

The wind had lessened, but now and then there were violent gusts that shook sprays of water on him. "Too much water is dangerous for you," Henry said, patting his coat where the twigs lay.

When he got back home, he found the old woman still sleeping. Julius was reading a newspaper.

"Didn't I tell you that the deer would eat it?" Henry asked

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with a soft, triumphant smile. He put the lantern on the table and held the pail with the piece of bread close to his brother's face. Julius bent forward and looked into the pail.

"Yes. You're right," he said. He stared into Henry's eyes for a short moment, and then he nodded. "But only a small piece."

"It was the smallest of them," Henry said. "It climbed into the pail. I investigated it."

He put the pail on the floor and took out the twigs from under his coat. "I'm going to go see that farmer," he said. "He'll give me a piece of ground where he's got nothing else growing. It's pretty likely that I'll go and live there, too. And then, when these have been planted, and when they're, let's say, this high"—he held his hand about two feet from the floor—"then deer about this size can come and live under it." He indicated the size with his thumb and forefinger.

"Where did you get all those from?" Julius asked, pointing at the twigs. "And why did you need the lantern?"

"Oh, I shine it right into their faces, and then they don't trouble me," Henry said, chuckling. "Albert wanted to eat the bread." He pointed into the pail. "All he wants to do is to stuff himself up with food. But I don't intend to give it to him, because it's the deer's. I don't have to take it back to them, but you can bet that Albert won't get it. Oh no."

He left the room, taking the pail and the branches with him. Julius saw him go into the garden and holding the bread in one hand, begin to dig a hole in the earth and to scoop it up into the pail. When it seemed to be sufficiently full, he dropped the bread into the hole and covered it up with loose soil. Then, pushing the twigs down gently into the pail, he brought it inside and put it down in the scullery.

"The deer are sure to get the bread now," he said when he came back in the room. "That much I know. And I don't have to take it back to them. They'll carry it back along their underground passages. It'll take them a bit more time, but they won't mind." He shrugged his shoulders.

The old woman woke up and looked about in confusion. When she saw Julius she smiled.

"It's very cold," she said. "Ugh, how cold it is!"

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"It's going to freeze, I think," Julius said.

"Why aren't we ever warm enough?" she complained.

"Are you warm enough over at your place? Is it warm enough for Katie? It mustn't be too cold for Katie."

"It's never very cold there," Julius answered. "But it's always so damp."

Julius lived in the center of the town, in one of the old, narrow streets. The street door opened directly into the front room which was a parlor that they never used, and in order to protect the carpet they always kept a path of newspapers through it leading to the small back room where they ate and slept. One morning when Katie was dusting, she discovered that all the furniture in the parlor had become completely ruined by dampness. The chair seats were so decayed that she could press her fingers through almost any part of them, and the wood of the table and chairs had mouldered away to such an extent that she could have easily torn off pieces with her hands. All of this, however, was not visible to outsiders, so everything had been left as it was.

"Maybe we'll get a gas heater," Julius said. "The heat they throw is so dry."

The old woman began to snicker. "We don't use gas," she said. Years and years before, the gas meter had gone wrong and for a time it had not registered the output of gas. Every time the man who read the meters had approached, she had removed the pans with incredible speed from the gas stove and had put them on an empty coal range, and after having concealed the gas stove, she had poked about industriously in the range until the man arrived. This had gone on for almost a year before the gas company had become suspicious and had replaced the meter.

Julius smiled. He remembered the story. He did not answer, but looked at Henry who had taken a seat at the table. A sheet of paper lay in front of him and the lantern stood at his side. The slide was open and the candle was still burning. He was writing on the paper with a piece of charcoal.

THE SOFT WOOD, he wrote. *Is here. I have it. I shall grow it. The Deer will live under it. The Silver Queen of the*

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deer. She said it was very good. She drank Glasses full of tea.

"Just wait and see," he said, looking at Julius. He tapped on the paper. "I'm going to put it on the wall, outside, but not before dark. Then you'll see people coming from everywhere. They all want to have some, but they're not going to get it right away."

Julius sat up straight in an attempt to read what had been written on the paper, but he felt Henry looking at him, and turning his eyes aside, he sank back again into the chair. The corset grated and creaked. Henry folded the paper, put it in his pocket, and closed the lantern.

Just then they heard people coming into the house through the street door. It was Henry's father, leading Mr. Captain in by the arm. Mr. Captain shuffled in, with a continuous smile on his face as though of surprise.

"This way towards the stove," the old man said. "Yes, yes. This is the way to the stove." He chuckled and led Mr. Captain around the table. In doing so they passed Henry who, holding his breath, shrank back noiselessly step by step.

"Come and sit here, where it's warm," the old woman called. "We've got it nice and warm for you." Henry had bumped up against the divan and was slowly sitting down. The old man, still holding Mr. Captain's sleeve, drew up two chairs and pushed him into one of them.

"Nice to see you, neighbor," the old woman said loudly. "Our Julius's here, too."

"Hello Captain," Julius said. "How's it going?"

"Fine, fine," Mr. Captain said, turning his face toward the back window and smiling. "And how are you?"

"Isn't it awfully cold, neighbor?" Henry's mother asked.

"Yes, very cold," Mr. Captain answered. "Suzy's caught the flu again. But I don't think I'll get it so easy. I don't go out if I don't have to."

It grew darker in the room, but they did not turn on the light. Now and then little puffs of smoke burst out from the closed lantern. The faces of the group around the stove were lit up in a red glow from the coals behind the mica panes.

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"Suzy's got the flu!" the old woman shouted into the old man's ear.

"Yeah, yeah, the flu," he muttered.

"So everybody's all right here," Mr. Captain said. The light of the stove shone through the flesh of his ear.

"Mr. Captain, you must put your face very near the stove," Henry suddenly called. "Do it right away!"

Mr. Captain turned his body to one side with a start. His smile left him for a moment, but then it reappeared.

"No thanks," he answered. "I'm near enough to it. It's warm enough here where I am."

"You must get so near that you think you can't stand it," Henry said. "You've got to get so hot that the skin falls off. That's what you've got to do."

Julius straightened himself up in his chair. He looked at Henry with an anxious twisted face and moved his mouth, but did not speak. The smell of the leather corset mixed with that of the lantern.

"Mr. Captain's warm enough," the old woman said. "Isn't he?"

"All day long they come and ask me for advice," Henry said. "And they talk and talk and talk! But it'll soon be over. I've written it down." He tapped on his chest. He got up and began to walk up and down. "They can read it themselves! And then they won't bother me any more. It'll be nice to have some peace, at last!"

Mr. Captain's face took on a frightened look. He listened attentively to the words, following Henry's voice with his head.

"Oh I hope you're not going to quarrel and scold again," the old woman said. "You mustn't do that. Those boys shouldn't always quarrel."

They heard the sound of the gate latch and then Albert crossed the backyard with his bicycle. He was followed by Fanny, but this time she did not have the dog with her.

"They're not afraid of the cold! Not afraid of the cold at all!" applauded the old woman. "Our Fanny's come to see us again. Even though it's so cold!"

They came into the room.

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"Any of you want to sit by the stove?" Mr. Captain asked. By the time they saw who was speaking he had already risen to his feet. Fanny refused the seat and pulled up another chair for herself, sitting down between Mr. Captain and the old woman. She had gone to the station another two times, and then had returned home where she had left the dog.

"Rik didn't come in on the half past four train," she said. "I waited awhile, but he wasn't on it."

"And I was standing at the other gate when the train came in," Albert said. "I would have seen him if he'd been on it." He sat down near the radio and put it on. It needed some time to warm up and made only a buzzing noise. "What a filthy stink there is in here," he said, sniffing.

"They said all the trains were late," Fanny said. "A man from the railway office told me and he said it was because of the frozen switches."

"And you believed it," Henry said. "Yes. You believe everything."

"You shouldn't quarrel, Henry," his mother said.

"He should keep his trap shut, that's all he has to do," Albert said. He turned the knob of the set and the blare of a military band filled the room. When he saw Julius put a finger in each ear, he turned it down low.

"Maybe he didn't feel well after the examination, and stayed with Femia for a while," Fanny said. "He'll probably come in on a later train." Then she added, as though thinking out loud, "But maybe he's gone to the harbor."

"It's that rotten lantern that's making the stink," Albert said. "That dirty pig's making us sit here in this stink. But we know what to do." He seized the lantern, stepped resolutely to the window, opened it, and threw the lantern outside. It came down in the backyard, and there was a sound of shattered glass. "One piece of rubbish out from under foot," he said with a grimace, and he closed the window.

Henry twisted his mouth, but he did not say anything.

"All that muck in the scullery, all that trash in the pail will have to be thrown out, and pretty quick," Albert said. "I'm going to need that pail for cleaning my motorcycle."

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"Our Albert's going to buy a motorcycle," the old woman said. "He's been working so hard, and now he can buy it. Puff puff, and he'll be able to go wherever he wants."

"All those damned sticks got tangled up in my bicycle wheels," Albert said. "I almost broke my neck trying to put it inside. Go and clear out that stuff right away!"

Henry hurried toward the door. In doing so he bumped against the table but he regained his balance and kept on. As he entered the kitchen, however, his pace turned into an uncertain shuffle, and a sound of moaning broke from his throat.

"What's the matter with him?" Fanny asked.

"Oh, he's only acting funny again," Albert said.

Suddenly, from the scullery, there came a loud shriek which was followed immediately by a dull clash of metal.

Albert rushed over to the kitchen. Fanny jumped up and followed him. The scullery door stood open and they could see Henry holding an old iron gaspipe high over his head. He groaned and then with all his strength he brought the pipe down on Albert's bicycle. Bits of enamel scattered about in a fine spray.

"Shut that door!" Albert called to Fanny. She closed the door behind her and stood with her back against it. Albert walked halfway across the kitchen.

"Stop it!" he yelled. "Do you hear! All you break will have to be paid for! You'll have to pay for every cent of it!"

"Ummn!" Henry groaned. He struck another blow at the bicycle, this time bending its frame. Then he turned around, and they saw his face. It was pale, with red spots. Around the eyes the skin was dark and swollen, and the corners of his mouth were pulled down with such tenseness that the inner side of his lower lip could be seen. Staggering, he approached Albert, and again lifted the gaspipe. They could see a bubble forming on his lip.

"Mother!" Fanny yelled. She tried to open the door of the room but, like a frightened animal, she only pushed the latch fast by her own weight.

Henry took another couple of steps. "Beesh. Seew. Seew,"

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he brought out. His hands opened and he dropped the gas-pipe. He seemed about to turn toward Albert, who had shrunk back pressed against the sink, but he shuffled past him. Fanny had succeeded in opening the door, and as she pushed it in she almost lost her balance. Henry had nearly reached it when his knees bent out and he fell. He rolled over on his back. His arms and legs shook involuntarily and his head thumped against the floor.

"That's that," Albert said.

A froth collected at Henry's mouth, and his movements slackened.

"I think I'll take him to the front room," Albert said. "He can't do any harm there." He grasped Henry under the arms and dragged his body through the living room where the others still sat round the stove. Fanny followed him.

"The less comfortable he is, the sooner he'll get over it," Albert said, letting the body down on the front room floor.

Mr. Captain had followed the sequence of sounds with a worried face. Henry's father had at last noticed that something was happening and looked up. "Damn," he said. "All that business again." He got up and put the light on over the mantelpiece and then another which sat on top of the radio. It was still playing march music, but softly.

"It all comes from that quarreling," the old woman said. "And then he just loses his temper."

The movements in Henry's body had almost stopped. A sharp, sour smell began to spread through the room.

"He's wet himself again," Albert said. "That's why I didn't put him on the rug." Both Fanny and he stepped back into the living room and Albert closed the door.

"Cold's good for him," he said. Then he went into the scullery to examine his bicycle. Through the window, they saw him go out into the backyard with the pail of twigs. He slung them out over the garden and shook the earth out of the pail.

Everyone was silent. The only sounds in the room were the creaking noises made by the corset of Julius and the soft music that the radio played.

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"Are you keeping warm over at your place, Mr. Captain?" Fanny asked. "It's so very cold everywhere, don't you think?"

"Pretty warm," Mr. Captain answered. "I sit in the kitchen most of the time. But we haven't got a stove in there. There's no chimney in the kitchen. So we have to put on the gas."

Albert came back into the room. "The frame's bent all to hell," he said. "That's forty or fifty guilders down the drain."

"What did he do it with?" Fanny asked.

"A gaspipe," Albert said. "The gas works people left it here."

The old woman began to snicker again. She was on the verge of saying something, but she fell silent. Suddenly she said, "It's beginning to get warm here. The children are so nice to me. We're all going to be together soon and then we'll sing."

"The next train's at five-forty, isn't it?" Fanny asked.

"He'll come over here, won't he?" Albert remarked.

"It's always good weather in trains," the old woman said. "Always warm. You can look out the window and see where you're going."

"I don't know," Fanny said uncertainly. "He had in mind going to the shipping office, at the harbor, if he felt all right after the examination. But maybe he had to wait there a long time."

"Which shipping office?" Julius asked.

"Rik wants to go to sea again," Fanny answered.

"What's that?" Julius asked. "He hasn't been at sea for twelve years, has he?"

"We've been talking about it a lot," Fanny said. "And I think it might be a good idea. If he thinks he'd be able to sail again, he ought to do it. We can't keep on living like this for ever."

"You don't know what they're going to say after he's been examined, though," Julius said.

"What difference will that make?" Fanny retorted. "They'll only think up something else right off again. They know us. They know what we belong to. Don't you think that plays a part?"

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"But will he be able to stand the food on board any better now?" Albert queried.

"Well, his ship's still sailing," Fanny said. "He heard about it a couple of weeks ago. It's the *Alicante*."

"That's a Spanish ship, isn't it?" Albert asked. "Isn't that a Spanish name?"

"It's the name of a town in Spain," Julius said.

"Well, it's the same ship," Fanny said. "And it's still got the same captain. It's Captain Schuurman."

"Captain Schuurman," Julius reflected. "But wasn't that the ship where he got into all those fights, and where he got fired? Wasn't it because he painted a hammer and sickle on the deck?"

"Captain Schuurman wasn't against him!" Fanny almost shouted. "He was on Rik's side! The purser and the steward, they'd been at it for weeks. And they got him mad. Captain Schuurman was very sorry, and he gave Rik a big box of cigarettes when he left. He said he knew it wasn't Rik's fault."

"Our Rik isn't lazy," the old woman said.

Mr. Captain got up, saying he had to leave.

Oh, don't go yet, neighbor," the old woman said, rubbing her hands. "Here we are all of us together. And Albert's going to play the mandolin."

Mr. Captain sat down again.

"All of them're here," she said as she turned her tiny face toward the others and began making movements with her head as though she were counting the number of persons with her chin. "Fanny, and our Albert, and Rik, and..." She stopped, and for a moment an impatient look passed over her face.

"Rik isn't here yet, mama," Fanny said. "He'll come presently."

The old woman rallied. "Oh, that's it!" she said, and she clapped her hands. "Yes, they'll all be here. And our Albert'll play for us."

There was a silence. Outside the darkness was almost complete. More and more lights went on in the houses around.

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"Albert's going to play," she continued. "Albert, get the mandolin!"

Albert turned off the radio and reached for the mandolin which stood behind it. He began tuning it and then he strummed on the strings. His heavy eyes stared absently into the room and his face took on an unctuous expression. Then, after a kind of prelude, he moved into the melody and sang slowly,

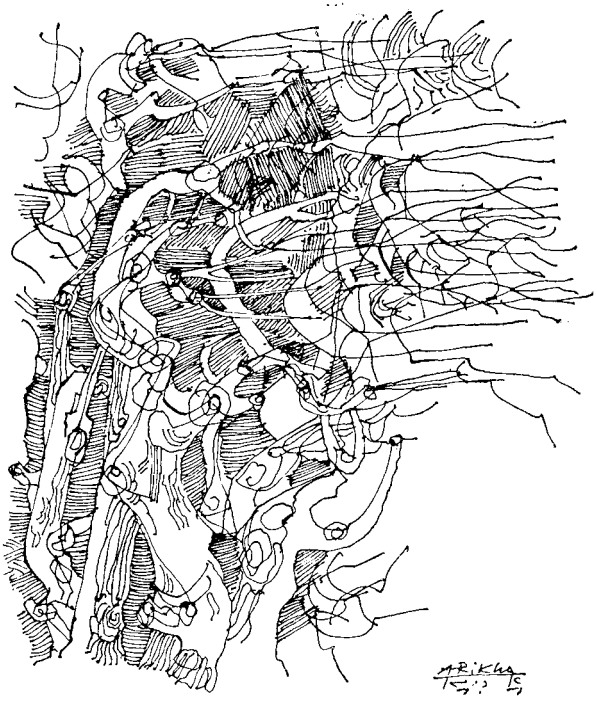
"*The People's Blood Is Shed In Streams...*"

Mr. Captain smiled and, turning his head toward Albert, nodded in time to the music. The old man at his side shifted his chair and, holding one hand to his ear, he began beating the rhythm with his free arm.

Julius sat motionless, staring at the floor.

The old woman raised her thin, faltering voice. Her eyes began to grow wet again as she joined Albert in the second line, singing,

"*And Bitter Tears In It Are Shed...*"



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ROBERT KRIEGER

A Summer's

LOOKING through crisscrossings of blackberry vines, Gable could see an early sky in flashing tatters, and he knew the heat knotted thick and wiry outside. Disturbed, he had been watching for rain clouds since the night before, but even now, though it was way past daybreak, there were none in view; only fuzzy leaves, fluroscoped intricately in the sunlight, wiggled finely above him.

Slowly he rubbed his eyes, watching a butterfly blow through the triangular opening of branches, jerk down the deep tunnel and turn out of sight. He had crouched so long in the narrow passage that his back twinged from the cramped position. As he looked about him again, at the berries darkening all along the tunnel's ceiling, he hated the knowledge that his whole wild field was to be burned, his field destroyed before the berries ripened, before he could sell them as Marv and he had planned so carefully.

He needed to sell the berries to run away. If Marv were only here to help, but he had moved. Saving the berries was up to him; there was no other way.

Aunt Verly? It would be useless to beg again. Her angry words in the kitchen last night, "You may as well stop. Is this some more of Marv's conspiracy? I want you to stop writing him. No, no, tomorrow that patch is going and that's all there's to it."

After they had come back from Iota (he had not wanted

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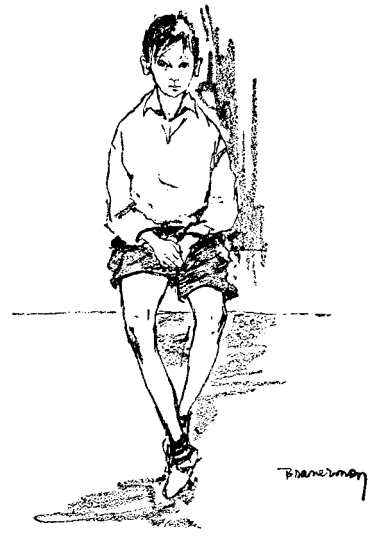
Burning



to go bec use he would miss Marv's letter), they found the blackberry vines in her roses. He knew what she would do then. She went on soaking her cut hands in the sink, glancing hard into the knowable darkness of the backyard. Out there she had struggled with the vines as best she could. But in the weeks they were gone, the vines had grown monstrous, sharp and tentacled. "And don't you forget it. No more letters! He's moved and that finishes it. Now bring in the rest of those suitcases." Her speech was dry and final; he could sense no deliberation.

Really, it had been an unfair blow. She had struck at him violently. "One has to make sudden decisions," she blurted out. Other times she had not been so eager to do so. Why now? "I've got to shake it all down first, Gable; I've got to shake it down."

So he had been foolish enough to imagine all verdicts, trivial or otherwise, were winnowed quietly through the soil-screen of her mind, facts sifted and sifted, implications examined under hard gray eyes.

She sent him scurrying over to Mr. Snipemiller's that very night. She had decided on the burning in an instant. What did the patch matter to her? When he talked to Mr. Snipemiller, he found him only too glad to help Aunt Verly. He said he would be over tomorrow. On the way home Gable thought about all the things Marv had said a long time ago, about

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certain things he had said concerning Snipemiller and Aunt Verly. Marv was undoubtedly right. Why hadn't he seen it? "Look and see, just look and see with your own eyes," Marv had said, "if it's someone like Snipemiller she's first in line, because that is the best she can do." Then Aunt Verly wasn't so interested in burning the patch, really, as she was in other things.

Lying here he could remember the very day Marv and he had burrowed their way through the blackberries. They had been sitting on Aunt Verly's porch, sipping hot water mixed with jam that rainless morning; it had been their only reward for cultivating the old German roses which grew so riotously rank each summer, and which were so precious to Aunt Verly. Marv had been irked by Aunt Verly's stinginess. How long after that day had Marv moved? How long?

"Gable, you and Marv did a poor job with the roses," she said, puckering her thin lips irritably. He suspected she was really quite satisfied. She held her face like a bait; he tensed for Marv's rebuttal.

"It all depends. You did a poor job with the payment." The jam had been almost sour.

Aunt Verly whirled from the screendoor. It was a movement her body seemed to enjoy. "A poor job," she repeated. Her eyes glinted, for she was about to give up the whole argument.

Many times before she had shown Gable her typed notes concerning Marv, "Marv's problem", as she put it with a touch of caution, notes she said that had to be mailed to Marv's mother someday. It was her duty. Not that one could do much, however, if the mother was as wayward as the son. He had only listened, very confused.

After the screendoor slammed and the breeze sent a quivering through the hawthorns like bees congregating, Marv and he sat quietly on the steps. Aunt Verly banged through each dark room. He heard her open windows on the cool side of the house. Soon she would be in front of her typewriter, or maybe downstairs with her innumerable, half-sanded chairs.

"You know," Marv said, "if I didn't understand your Aunt Verly perfectly, I might get to dislike her. I've got it all figured out. Listen, I mean..."

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"What do you mean?" Gable could hear the typewriter inside.

"It's funny," Marv went on, "funny she doesn't pick up with that old man Snipemiller down the block. There's a problem!" He tossed the rest of his drink into the hawthorns. Who could dupe Marv?

Marv's retaliation had never gone this far. Gable did not understand; but Marv had his own way at mystery.

"Ya, why do you suppose your Aunt Verly never got married again?"

"I don't know."

Actually he had never thought much about it—anymore; not that he wasn't curious though. She had been married once, to Uncle Karl; but she was no longer married when he came to stay after his father died, and he had always accepted the fact of her widowhood easily. The house, with its dark stained rooms, was stranger than a lodge, oppressive and forbidding. But that was when he first came here. Such memories, coming back suddenly with Marv's words, stirred him.

"Listen, Old Man Snipemiller drinks plenty. I found him once down at Irving park, mumbling drunk. I suppose she knows about him though," Marv said.

Gable did not answer.

Marv struck his usual pose, cocking his red head, and went right on. "You can't figure it out? Listen, if she's been married to a drunk before, most likely she'd line up again. It's their way. Those kind of women go out of their way to marry trouble. Even my mother says so."

Gable watched a dragonfly hover over the lawn. Aunt Verly? Did Marv really mean Aunt Verly?

"People say, too, it's because of her your Uncle Karl started drinking. They say she drove him crazy as well." He narrowed his eyes. "She hasn't got anything, now, but you and her stupid chairs... and of course Old Man Snipemiller."

Gable remained quiet. Somehow he couldn't stop Marv from speaking this way. It was strange. Anyway wasn't Marv overdoing the whole thing? Sure, Aunt Verly was funny; so people were always testing him, expecting that he would, of course, defend her, as he was expected to. But he was expect-

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ed to defend Uncle Karl also. It was very confusing, and when such occasions arose, he usually remained quiet. Especially with Marv.

He turned to watch the dragonfly jerk and zigzag off.

"Anyway, that's what it's all about. Just look and see with your own eyes. When Snipemiller's around, you just watch." Marv was tired of circling the subject. "If she can't get him, she wants him. So, if I was you, I'd just think about it. She's still got you and her chairs. Right?"

Gable was trying hard to forget what Marv was proving, except that Aunt Verly *was* Aunt Verly and everyone in town knew that.

"Let's go in the backyard and do something else," Gable said. He had finished his drink, so they both put their cups on the steps. "Are you coming?" Gable asked.

Marv collared Gable and they ducked through the hawthorne hedge and around to the backyard. Marv climbed the fence. Now and then he kicked at the white roses that signalled in the air.

Gable was looking at the freshly-varnished Duncan-Phyfe chairs Aunt Verly had set on newspapers to dry. She had, as always, protected the back lawn. It suddenly struck him how finicky she was about sanding and lacquering and polishing them. "The problem is how to take off all that no-good varnish," she would say again and again.

"Suppose the blackberries are ripe?" Marv asked. The vines stretched young and green. He could see there were no berries yet.

"No."

"How do you know so much? Are you trying to act like her? Don't think I'm so dumb, like she thinks I am."

"Well, they're not ripe. I just know." He felt suddenly irritated and confused at Marv.

"Why don't we build a hut under the bushes?" Balancing himself nicely on one foot, Marv pulled then at his sock.

"No," Gable said. He could still hear Marv's remarks about Aunt Verly. He looked up at Marv. Marv's teeth were bad in the sunlight.

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"Are you calling me a fool? Just watch it." He looked mad and about to jump from the fence.

"All right... all right let's build a hut." Gable knew he had to act quickly, for Marv's face smouldered with anger. He did not want Marv to leave now; he would have nothing to do but stay in the house with Aunt Verly. He would have nothing to do but think about all the things Marv had said earlier. "I'll get our clippers. O.K?"

Marv stood for a moment watching him from the fence, and then suddenly indifferent again, he began to parade back and forth like a tight-rope artist, arms outstretched, walking balanced.

Aunt Verly poked her head through the curtain of grapevines that reached the length of the sunporch; already they formed an impenetrable curtain. Her eyes winked and squinted in the light. When she saw Marv poised precariously over the roses, her mouth dropped and she lifted her dry voice.

"You watch out for those roses, Marv Lessing. If you so much as heelmark one of them, I'll get your Ma to swat you good."

"The hell you say," Marv blustered, nearly toppling off at her voice. "You don't have to worry."

Gable stood listening in the basement doorway. Marv's curse had stopped her from regaining any decorum. Aunt Verly turned on Gable, still angry from earlier.

"And just what are you supposed to be doing down there, Gable?"

"Getting the clippers..."

"What clippers?" She whirled her glance back to Marv. He was walking the line of the fence.

"Marv and I are going to tunnel under the bushes."

"Well, it won't do any good. That patch's to be burned as soon as I can get Snipemiller over here. Nothing's going to strangle my roses if I can help it. They're all I've got left of your Uncle Karl and Iota and..."

Marv had begun to laugh loudly at Aunt Verly's mention of Old Man Snipemiller's name.

"You aren't no puzzle to me," he called out. "You sure aren't any puzzle to me." He looked straight at Gable.

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Gable knew exactly what Marv meant. He was not sure Aunt Verly didn't know too. He wanted to say something, either to defend her or nod to Marv, but he only watched her falter.

She tightened her sash about her delicate bones until her frame tilted slightly forward. She seemed to be enveloped for a moment in some dark, arresting vision or cloud. She picked at her hairpins. "You just stay away from me. I've had enough. Stay clear from me, Marv Lessing." It was a weak threat, and Gable, watching her from the doorway, felt suddenly ashamed. "You all just stay away from me." There was something terrible in her eyes when she turned and bolted in.

"You sure aren't any puzzle to us," Marv whispered after the screendoor shut, "and you don't own anything either."

Aunt Verly? Aunt Verly? In that brief moment it was if his own thoughts about her had suddenly multiplied. Everything about her seemed so simple before, so unquestionable. From the cellar door, in the shade of the house, he looked at Marv. They had signed a secret pact. He knew it with Marv's smile.

"What are we waiting for?" Marv said. "She'll never burn that patch."

Gable was sure, now, hearing the typewriter begin inside the kitchen, that Marv was right about Snipemiller. Aunt Verly had not denied it.

Weeks later the berries were about as big as nasturtium seeds; but Marv had moved to the seacoast. The Y-shaped tunnel had been completed long before, and it had become more important than a secret place.

After the brief mornings of rain, Marv had grown more and more interested in the possibilities of the tunnel and spent part of one day gently pulling the berry cluster through the roof, so that they hung from the ceiling. Marv had decided they would get bigger in the shade. So the larger the berries (they had already decided to sell them), the more money they were bound to make. They would talk about money when they lay on their backs looking up at the growing berries. But Marv moved unexpectedly then, and Gable, with a promise of early letters, was alone.

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At nights in bed—he did little now but listen to his radio or write letters—he would look down at the field. Sometimes he would sneak out when Aunt Verly was sleeping or lacquering her chairs; sometimes he would go out and watch the progress of the berries.

When Marv's letters began to arrive, he knew how much he really missed him. Aunt Verly grew curious. Once she said she was sorry for getting cross and sending him home on occasion; but then again she would anger over the small hurts that Marv had inflicted, reciting a whole catalogue of them in a loud voice, strange, insignificant hurts. After each outburst she would suddenly scurry to her typewriter.

There was a time he might have told her something, but the time had passed. He felt only more secret. Up in his room he studied the various calculations and maps Marv had sent. They were maps that would lead him eventually to Marv. He thought about nothing but the money from the berries, how he would board a train and visit Marv. Plans from there were wildly indefinite.

One night, that strange night of the electric storm, the telephone rang, and standing at the top of the dark stairs, he listened to the call from Iota. It was a Frau Newman. He could hear Aunt Verly saying, "Clara, Clara," repeating the name over and over, "they're tearing down the old house! Karl's house! They're holding an auction? Well, he wouldn't do that. He's out of town? Can I come, can I come?"

After she had hung up, she sat for some time on the steps just below him. There was a long aftermath of quiet. Outside the electric storm played light into the hawthornes, and for the first time he noticed how the intricate hair grew from her thin neck, starting far down in swirls. It was perverse. He couldn't help thinking to himself that if anything was reason for his conspiracy against her now, her strange wild hair was reason enough.

Aunt Verly was determined to stop them from tearing down the house; they left in a flurry, suitcases tossed into the Ford, windows shut and shuttered, notes left for the milkman. The lightning could not match her excitement.

All night as they went sailing along the highway, her voice

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filled the stuffy interior of the car. "I know he wouldn't sell the house, no matter what he thinks of me. Are you listening, Gable? Wake up! Talk to me a little bit." After miles and miles she still went on dryly. "Something's happened to Karl, really. He'd never sell the house."

At the auction he did not even see Uncle Karl. Aunt Verly did nothing but sit with the rest of the spectators, glancing about every so often, looking for someone. She couldn't even raise the price for the marble fireplace she wanted so badly. She told him not to ask questions. After several weeks of involvement, she decided to leave. She carried on telephone arguments with all of Karl's relatives, saying his mother was to blame for him running off. Finally, she grew listless and decided to return home.

On the curb under the tall misty elms where they said goodbye to Frau Newman, her sleepy children on her arms, Frau Newman said, "You're forty-five, Verly, why don't you think about giving the whole thing up. Think about it. He's gone for good. He was just a nuisance anyway. Think of all the things you can do, now that you're by yourself." Aunt Verly seemed a little nettled. She began to tell Clara about Karl's roses and how worried she was for them now, chasing off the way she had.

Roses, roses, roses, and she never stopped. Once at the service station, the fog came up a few miles out of town, and she pulled over to clean the windshield. He awoke to find her staring in on him. In the passing lights that slid from her face, he watched her. After all the miles they'd covered, he thought, she never asked once whether he might like to go and see Marv. Never once.

When they pulled into their own driveway, past the familiar hawthornes, Aunt Verly told him to unload the suitcases. She hurried to the back fence.

After he switched on the frontporch light, absorbed for a moment in wondering how large the berries were now, whether they were ready to be sold, he began to carry in the suitcases. There *was* a letter from Marv in the mailbox, and he quickly stuffed it into his coat pocket.

It was dark in the long hallway, and the closed-up air came

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at him from the open basement below, strong odors of varnish and wet. He flicked on the dining room lamp and began to open Marv's letter. His hands were hot as he read it. He turned it over and over, surprised at what the printed words conveyed. Aunt Verly had really sent a crazy note to Marv's mother. Really, really. His baffled eyes travelled out from the whiteness of the paper. He stared absently at the various objects in the room.

He was suddenly angry and dizzy. He read the words again. All the strange ideas about Aunt Verly, her crazy notes, the wild dark things people said to her, her injustices against Marv and he, why? why? Everything seemed to well up in him. The room came forward all at once. Standing in its assertive surroundings, the half-sanded chair, the leather bindings, the typewriter, he heard his heart beat faster, and he started to think how he could explain to Marv. He was sorry. Marv had been right; he would sell the berries and leave as soon as possible. Aunt Verly was evil—or why would she do such a thing?

It was some time before he heard her out in the darkness.

When he reached her, she was tearing at the vines barehanded. The roses were encircled. In his flashlight glow he could see that her hands were bleeding.

"My god," she cried, "get another light!"

He stood there for a minute letting his hatred run rampant. When he found her with the larger flashlight, she was breathing hoarsely over the vines. "I'll burn that patch tomorrow if it's the last thing I do!"

He knew she would say this. He only looked at her, hearing himself say Marv had been right all along about her and Snipemiller. He felt his hand tighten on Marv's letter.

"Oh, Gable, the flashlight! The flashlight! Can't you help at all?"

Later that night he had taken the message to Mr. Snipemiller. She was almost incoherent when she told him to go. She stood at the sink, washing her cut hands, looking frantically into the backyard. He didn't pay much attention, but it looked as if she were about to cry. And even later that night, he crept down to the patch and hid in the tunnel.

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"Those French movies down at Oceanlake," Mr. Snipemiller said to Aunt Verly as he began to make preparations for burning the patch, "Karl and me saw all of those." The afternoon sunlight glistened on the can of beer he held in his hand. He spoke only between swallows.

Aunt Verly nodded with a faraway look. Snipemiller had been Karl's friend. She laughed suddenly, moving with her usual caution. She did not watch Gable where he straddled the fence.

Mr. Snipemiller dropped his pickax for a moment. He was laughing too. He had already cleared a wide ditch the rectangle of the patch, and when he took up the ax again, Gable listened to its steady sound clumping into the earth, upheaving roots and tin cans. Aunt Verly continued to talk so softly he could barely hear her.

"I used to fear it when Karl came home after seeing those French movies."

She was unaware he was watching her. Her frame hung far over the fence, and he recalled her words at lunch although he had refused to beg her again. "No. I'm tired of fighting with you. I'm tired of fighting those brambles and that little corrupter Marv. I am just finished, so you can stop. What's it all about anyway?" She went on patting her hair in front of the vanity. He would not tell her anything, no matter what.

"I don't know whether the roses will pull out of it this year or not," Aunt Verly said.

"You can never tell much about roses. They're faded all right, but you never know. Sometimes it takes years." Mr. Snipemiller took off his shirt in the hot sun, and Aunt Verly turned toward the open-windowed house. It was the same sort of gesture she had made before, saying, "You'll understand sometime that you can't have your own way. When you grow up, you'll find out just how hard it is to get along."

When? Gable thought. If he were as old as Marv he could do anything. He would leave Aunt Verly money or no money. He would go down to the coast and join Marv. They would build a raft and sail to Mexico. It would be so easy to fight her from there. They would train birds, birds with wild

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eyes that he'd seen in the *National Geographics*, and they'd buzz up and wreck her rosebuds faster than vines.

"You've no idea what it means to talk to you," Aunt Verly droned on. Snipemiller only nodded. He tilted his beer can again. "I fight the same old thing each year," she said. "It's about time I got around to burning the patch." Mr. Snipemiller swung the pickax hard.

Gable watched Mr. Snipemiller look at Aunt Verly when she turned toward the house. Mr. Snipemiller smiled and gave him a quick wink. Aunt Verly fiddled about the roses. He couldn't help thinking of Marv, how right he had been about her. Burning the patch was not what she really wanted. She wanted this excuse to see Snipemiller. Anyway, why should anyone grow up if they couldn't do what they wished. She was getting her own way. And all her notes concerning Marv's problem, and the letter she had sent to Marv's mother, never amounted to anything but a trick. Nothing about her made sense, her memories about dull Iota and Uncle Karl who had only left her some old roses.

"When we came home from Karl's, we found them like this. They were nearly finished," Aunt Verly went on, "So I thought if anyone could do it, you could. I mean burning the patch. And we thought, too, that you might like the money; didn't we, Gable."

No, Gable said, but she wasn't listening.

"Verly, you know that isn't really the reason." Snipemiller's voice was full of humor as he walked away.

From the corner of his eye, Gable saw Aunt Verly shudder. How many times had people said that to her? What's the real reason, Verly?

"About ready to set fire to the berries," Mr. Snipemiller said from the other side of the patch. "I'll get the extinguisher from the truck just to play it safe."

He could see how perturbed Aunt Verly acted. Mr. Snipemiller knew what she was trying to do; he could tell the way Mr. Snipemiller glanced at him as he went by.

Mr. Snipemiller carried back the extinguisher and the rusted kettle of kerosene. He had opened another can of beer.

"You be careful when he starts that fire, Gable," Aunt

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Verly said. Her voice crackled like the dry blackberry canes. All the caution that had nestled around her had fled.

How he wished it would suddenly rain. Only two clouds floated far up and away. He tried to catch Mr. Snipemiller's eyes.

"About coming over tonight for the money," Mr. Snipemiller said, not looking at anyone at all, "maybe I'll let Gable bring it over." He stood poised to touch the match.

"Won't you please come? I've depended so much on your help and..."

Snipemiller did not answer. He seemed to be forever slipping from her grasp. She stopped talking, for he was on the other side of the patch now, pouring the last of the kerosene into the bushes. He lit a soaked rag and threw it into the tunnel.

It was a long time before smoke curled from under the dry leaves. Slowly then, like thin rivers, it began to ascend. Everyone stood very still.

Underneath, the slow movement of the fire crackled, invisible and sly. White butterflies, flicking nervously from openings, poured through the haze and scattered helter-skelter in the smoke. Bees ripped the air with their sounds of anger; the sky was full of noises and paper-frail wings. The fire suddenly caught on. In the sunlight every mote of existence showed in the doubled light, in the blazing fire and the sunshine, and whirled quickly before him. Back of him he heard the house windows slam. This was the first time, turning to let her know how he really felt, he knew Aunt Verly was no longer by the fence.

Two racers darted from the burning bushes. Just under his dangling feet, they made for the roses where the sunlight fell unbroken and hot. It was like a battle and he was on observation. Grasshoppers zipped by, big and straw-colored. Though the smoke was knotting thicker, he still could see no flames.

"Ladybug, Ladybug," Mr. Snipemiller started to cry from the other side of the blaze, "fly away home. Your house is on fire and your chairs will burn." He pointed wickedly toward Aunt Verly's house and began to laugh and wink.

The fire began to burn more quickly. Bright tips of flame

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flew angrily at the vines. Gable felt himself suddenly caught up in it; his face and hands burned with the heat. He thought about Marv. And he hoped that when he saw him for the first time again, it would be at night; he wouldn't have to see Marv's face plainly until he had told him the whole story.

The roof of the hut lifted itself almost straight up. He could see that the berries were gone. Suddenly the vines crumbled in a shatter of ash.

Still a cycle of bees buzzed over the flames, confused and gyrating viciously. One of them dived at Mr. Snipemiller through the smoke. Snipemiller only laughed and slapped at it with his bare hand.

An explosion of glass splattered through the rest of the burning foliage. It tore along the ground like insects plinking against the fence. "Look out for that flying glass," Mr. Snipemiller called. Gable could hear him only indistinctly.

The patch was a mass of fire now. It blazed noisily, crackling, flicking the air dizzy. Layers of haze shimmered before him, and the casing of heat that stood upright in front of the ditch burned his face. In the sound of the fire he heard himself cursing Aunt Verly.

Smoke hung high over the field. It blanketed the sky about him. The sunlight, filtering through the smoke, fell only broken. Once more he turned back to the house where a smoky pall drifted slowly toward its roof. All its windows were shut and final.

From upstairs Aunt Verly, her face long and pale and bluish, looked down on him. But she was far away. For an instant, with the smoke curling dangerously about the shingles and wooden roof, he saw that she was trapped in a fire. But it was her own fault, for what was she doing upstairs, and how had she gotten upstairs so fast?

Like a failing fountain the fire gradually lowered. It died out slowly where the tunnel had wound. Mr. Snipemiller did not rake the debris. Picking up his extinguisher, his rusted kettle, he carried them to his truck. When he came back, he put on his shirt. He stacked his beer cans along the fence.

"Kind of scared about that flying glass," he said. "Tell your

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Aunt Verly I'm done when you get ready to. You can bring the money over later." He tapped Gable on the knee and smiled. "Don't know how good all this is going to do anyway with those damn vines. You couldn't get rid of a patch like this if you tried. Burn it down, that's just what it likes. It'll be up before anything else. Isn't that right?" He winked then like an ally. He walked back to his truck, and as he drove away, he waved.

For a long time Gable sat on the fence. It was almost sundown. The smoke had moved only slightly in the faint air. He tried to think what Mr. Snipemiller had said. In his mind he went over the letter he would have to write Marv. If Marv did not understand, he wasn't a real friend, and he had lied about getting together and running away. But Marv would understand because it was Aunt Verly's doing. They both understood Aunt Verly now. He could see what she was like as Marv had seen all along.

Aunt Verly called from the backporch. Her voice came at him through endless curtains of air. "Come on in, Gable. We're going to eat. Come on."

At the sound of her voice, he turned to look back at her. She had put on a new dress. He dropped himself abruptly to the other side of the fence. He ripped out a wire of grass, still black with smoke. For a moment he sat there trying to hear her move across the lawn. Was she coming? He stuck the grass between his front teeth, stood up, and shuffled through the dust. Little stones shot up before him.

Aunt Verly came to the fence then. She was speaking, but he tried not to listen. Her voice was smooth and her words deliberate. Absently he dug his tennis shoe into the ground where the center of the tunnel had been, where the berries had hung large and heavy. "You don't have to dress up," he said suddenly, "he's not coming back."

When he pulled his foot away, a root sprang halfway up at him. For a moment he stood looking at it. There was only silence from the far side of the fence. He dropped to his knees. He began digging furiously, exposing hard tips of roots that clung far, far down to unscorched earth. "Burn it, that's just what it likes," Mr. Snipemiller had said. They would grow

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again! He would tell Marv. He would tell Marv about Snipemiller also. They would grow again!

"Gable," Aunt Verly cried, "did he say he wasn't coming over!"

Quietly he pressed himself to the ground and thought how wonderful to be hunting on the Mexican rivers soon, to be stalking mossy crocodiles through the underbrush.

When she started to plead, he pressed his eyes to an inward darkness. He started the humming far back in his throat. And out of the deepening sky, the earth, and the seared nubs of brambles, he heard a strange shrieking of birds and saw that the smoke had fled as completely as the white butterflies. And... yes! yes!... there was a warm wild clattering in the foliage, in the nearby trees, and an oncoming night, secret, equatorial, breathing on him like a boa.

THE MALLARD'S GOING

At the end of October a mallard
came down
to the lake's edge
and at a gesture
of the air
without a look or rush
or noise of ritual
without great earth shift
left

us; and pulled in waterbright folds
behind him
the last lengths of our year
while willows dropped their paper
tears and a swan's head moved
round
as thin as snow
upon the turned
wind.

—JOHN LOGAN

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Fiction

WILLIAM FAIN *(At the Pool)* is the author of a highly regarded first novel *The Lizard's Tail* which was published last year by Knopf. He is a New Yorker (born 1917), a graduate of Harvard (1939), and a former cryptographer, interpreter, reporter, and editor of a turf magazine. He is presently living in New Orleans.

ROBERT KRIEGER *(A Summer's Burning)* is a Teaching Fellow in English at the University of Washington. His poetry has been published in *Poetry* and *New Campus* Writing, among other magazines. This is his first published story.

LAWRENCE STURHAHN *(The Democrat)* was born in 1928 and studied writing at the University of Iowa. He is Assistant Director of Industrial Film Productions. The *Democrat* is his first published story.

GERARD-KORNELIS VAN HET REVE *(The Winter)* is 32 years old and one of Holland's leading writers. Two of his stories, the *Acrobat* and *Gossamer* have been published in previous issues of THE PARIS REVIEW. In 1951 the Dutch government awarded him a scholarship for his novella *Melancholia* but withdrew it the day after its announcement on grounds that his work was "a danger to the public welfare". A committee of writers then raised a fund to replace the scholarship. He has since written only in English and recently has been working in London.

Portfolio

PIERRE SCHNEIDER *(text on Masson)* has recently been appointed an Advisory Editor of THE PARIS REVIEW. One of the leading young French critics, he is the author of two books of essays, *La Voix Vive* and *Les Cinq Saisons*, both published by Editions de Minuit.

Interviews

EUGENE WALTER, an Associate Editor of this magazine, lives in Rome. Winner of the Lippincott Prize for his novel *The Untidy Pilgrim*, he was recently awarded a Sewanee Fellowship in poetry. A second novel, *Almost Like People*, will appear next year.

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BLAIR FULLER, also Associate Editor, is now teaching writing at Barnard College in New York City after three years in French West Africa and Paris; his novel, *A Far Place*, which is set Africa, will be published by Harper this winter. ROBERT B. SILVERS, Paris Editor, is also Director of Editions Finisterre.

Poetry

EDGAR BOWERS *(A Variation on "O never say that I was false at heart")* teaches at Harper College in New York. He published his first volume of poems, *The Form of Loss*, with Alan Swallow this year.

HAROLD FLEMING *(Echoes)* teaches high school in Clymer, Pennsylvania.

ROGER HECHT *(Two Poems)* studied at Kenyon College. His work has been published in *The Saturday Review* and *Poetry*.

ELIZABETH JENNINGS *(Merely Looking)* published her long *Sequence in Venice* in THE PARIS REVIEW last year. Her second book of verse, *A Way of Looking*, appeared in both England and America this year. She is a recent winner of the English Somerset Maugham award.

JOHN LOGAN *(The Mallard's Going)*, author of a book of poems entitled *Cycle for Mother Cabrini*, is Assistant Professor in the General Program of Liberal Arts at Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana.

RICHARD O'CONNELL *(Etude)* served in the Navy for four years and is now attending Temple University.

W. D. SNODGRASS *(Orpheus)* has studied with Karl Shapiro and Robert Lowell and published in a number of literary magazines. He is teaching at Cornell.

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SOUS LES TOITS DE PARIS

A directory to eating, drinking and shopping in Paris

RESTAURANTS, BARS, AND CABARETS

MONTPARNASSE

Restaurants

Murat, 60, Blvd. Montparnasse, Lit. 20-60. A good cheerful little eating place, good service... personal attention at moderate prices. Typically French.

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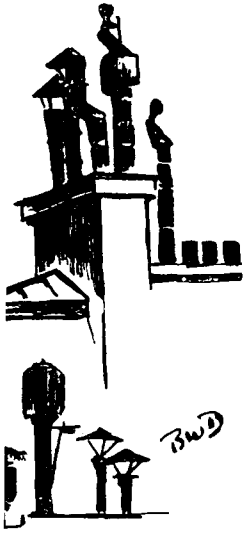
Le Nègre de Toulouse, 159, Boulevard du Montparnasse. Cooking in the style of the South of France. Moderate prices. Specialty: Cassoulet Toulousian.

Restaurant Sainte-Beuve, 8, rue Sainte-Beuve. Greek specialties. Moderate prices. English speaking, family cooking. Artists and their friends.



Restaurant des Etats-Unis, 135, Blvd. du Montparnasse, Dan. 33–26. Good Meals served at any hour of the day or night until 2:00 A.M. Typically French "Spécialités D'Auvergne"

Bars and Cabarets

Les Vikings, 29, rue Vavin. Bar-Americain-Brasserie. Open all night. A favorite of Americans in Paris.

ST. GERMAIN-DES-PRES

Restaurants

Calvet, 165, Blvd. St. Germain, Lit. 93–51. Coq en paté... Cassoulet... Canard à l'orange. First class food and service, intimate, rather expensive.

IVe République, 42, rue Jacob, 6e. A gay and promising little restaurant with a real St. Germain-des-Près flavour. French and Alsatian specialties at moderate prices.

Bars and Cabarets

Le Trou Madame, 3, Passage de la Petite Boucherie. "Club Privé" open to all comers, where an advanced Cha-Cha-Cha is danced between sessions of the 15th century jeu of "Trou Madame". Near the church of St. Germain-des-Pres and the Place Furstenberg.

Le Tournon, Café-Tabac. A famous literary café, 18, rue de Tournon. Tel. Dan. 16–16.

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LATIN QUARTER

Restaurants

La Bouteille d'Or, 9, Quai de Montebello, 5e, Ode. 52–58. A good restaurant opposite Notre Dame. Specialité: "La Frecassee de Poulet comme en Provence". Not expensive.

Le Port du Salut, 163, bis, rue St. Jacques, 5e, Ode. 32–03. A friendly and intimate little restaurant. Provencale specialties at very reasonable prices; typically "Rive gauche" cabaret dancing; the dancers wear masks of prominent people from history or the arts. Open all night except Monday.

Scandia Club, 35, rue Gay-Lussac, Ode. 99–47. A favorite of old timers of the "Colonie Americaine". Excellent Smorgasbord, music and entertainment till 2 a.m. (Average 1200 frs. or 3 dollars.)

Coq d'Or, 13, rue Malebranche, 5e, Dan. 25–43. Russian and oriental specialties. Slav atmosphere. Good and reasonable.

ETOILE, CHAMPS ELYSEES, AND CONCORDE

Restaurants

Chez Francis, Place de l'Alma, Ely. 79–11. A famous cafe and restaurant, rendezvous of leading writers, actors, playwrights. Pleasant view from terrace. Grill room, excellent food, not inexpensive.

Le 32 Longchamp, 32, rue de Longchamp, 16e. Authentic Basque and Spanish cuisine in a charming setting. Close to the Trocadero.

Chez Cyprien, 75, Ave. Kleber, 16e. Pas 37–90. A convenient little restaurant between the Etoile and the Trocadero. Cuisine francaise, specialité Chicken pie. Reasonable prices.

Restaurant des Arcades, 61, rue de Ponthieu, 8e. Ely 52–89. A small restaurant for those who want to eat without spending too much. Probably the lowest prices in the quartier.

La Truite, 30, rue Fauborg St. Honoré, 8e, Anj. 12–86. One of Paris' most distinguished restaurants. Features delicious Norman specialties. On a picturesque court off the Right Bank's chief shopping street. Under the direction of the famous Marcel Dorin.

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PALAIS ROYALE

Vesinet des Halles, 13, rue Lavandières, Cen. 73–68. A quaint restaurant just behind the Théâtre du Châtelet, cozy and charming, not expensive.

Milord l'Arsouille, 5, rue de Beaujolais, Palais Royale, Cen. 88–14. Night club. Floor Show. Bar. Attractions in a genuine setting of the French Revolution.

MONTMARTRE

Aux Lilas, 24, rue Saint-Lazare, 9e. Turkish, Greek and Armenian dishes. A pleasant moderately priced restaurant, a few minutes from Pigalle. Specially recommended: Cous-Cous and Chiche-Kabab.

Bolee St Georges, 37, rue St-Georges. A "self-service" restaurant where you can lunch well in half an hour at half the price. Normal service evenings.

Au Tournant de la Butte, 46, Rue Caulaincourt, 18e. One of the best restaurants of the quartier, and not at all expensive.

Auberge des Ducs de Bourgogne, 2, Square d'Anvers, 9e. An old established tavern 200 yards from Pigalle. Quiet, conservative and first class.

SHOPPING IN PARIS

Saint Germain des pres

ART MATERIALS, The Paris American Art Co., 2, rue Bonaparte, 6e. Everything for the artist and sculptor, whatever the medium.

CERAMIQUES, Pierre Bedel, 7, rue des Sts. Peres, 6e. Pierre Bedel is a potter and artisan, who designs and creates traditional and modern French ceramics and pottery in his studio.

Palais Royal

PERFUMES, For You, 233, rue St. Honoré, 1er. American shopping. Finest perfumes, novelties... objets de fantasie... Members of the The Diners' Club.

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Quartiers Divers

SHOPPING, L'Ane Bleu, 41, Rue de Penthievre, 5e. An indiscribable little collection of hats and other frivolités, even giraffes for the children.

Montparnasse

HATS, Colette Duvivier, 92, Bd. du Montparnasse. A wide autumn collection of ladies' hats. Originality and chic.

Left Bank art galleries

Photographie Giraudon, 9, rue des Beaux Arts, 6e, Dan. 93–83. Offers you complete photo-reproduction service for the arts, history, and archaeology. Classification system facilitates research, expedites orders. Color transparencies, slides & prints, Ektachrome & Kodachrome.

Galerie de l'Institut, 6, rue de Seine, 6e, Ode. 32–90. Directed by Marise Levesque. Artistes contemporains et antiquités. Important collections.

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